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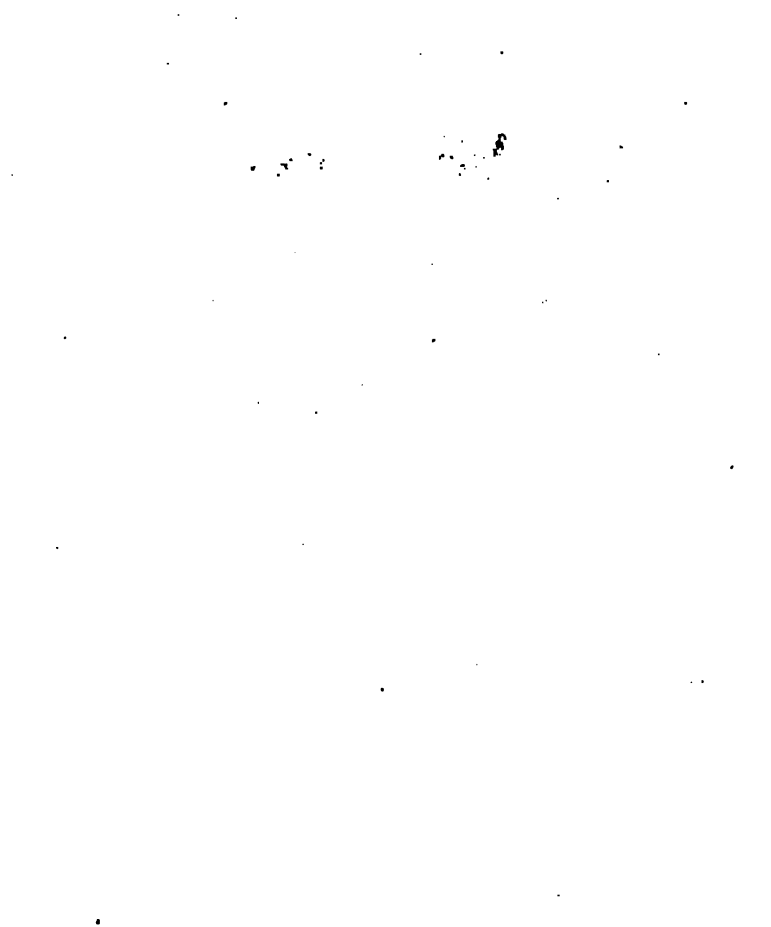
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HENRY WONNACOTT,

LATELY

MINISTER OF ALBION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
HULL.

Memorial Volume.

EDITED BY HIS WIFE.

"Oh! think awhile,
It matters little at what hour o' the day
The righteous fall asleep. Death cannot come
To him untimely who is fit to die.
The less of this cold world—the more of heaven
The briefer life—the earlier immortality."



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TO

Evan Frazer, Esq., M.R.C.S.

THE TRUEST AND TENDEREST OF FRIENDS,

WHOSE LOVING CARE

HELPED TO SMOOTH THE PASSAGE

THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH,

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS

GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

THIS little book is printed specially for those who knew and loved the preacher. The sermons were never designed for publication, and never revised in any way by their author: they were simply prepared in the ordinary course of weekly ministerial work, amidst a pressure of extraneous engagements, and often in seasons of great weakness and pain; so that if they are faulty from a literary point of view, it will not be greatly wondered at. They are given almost entirely in the same words in which they were delivered. Occasional inadvertencies have been corrected in preparing the manuscripts for the press, but it has been felt a delicate matter to alter even one syllable penned by the dear hand now still for ever.

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MEMORIALS.

MEMORIALS

OF THE

REV. HENRY WONNACOTT.



HENRY WONNACOTT was born at Tiverton, Devonshire, November 26th, 1849. He was the youngest of a large family; but most of them had died in infancy, and the only surviving brother and sister had left home long before his birth. His parents were Wesleyans, his father being a class-leader for many years, and highly respected for his upright and Christian character. He seems to have had a tinge of the old Puritan sternness in his character and in his dealings with his son, inspiring him rather with reverence than tenderness; but to his mother the boy clung with all the devoted love of his passionate nature, and his great childish grief was the fear that she would die and leave him. One Sunday afternoon was never forgotten, when, sitting in the little Methodist chapel, the idea struck him

so forcibly that his mother was dead (most likely he had fallen asleep and dreamed), that he could not rest another moment, but rushed from the place, and ran in an agony of fear to his own home, to throw himself into his mother's arms, and sob away his trouble on her breast.

His earliest religious impressions were those of fear and gloom through the preaching of the terrors of the Law in the Wesleyan Chapel at Tiverton. His childish terrors were so great that they haunted the night as well as the day, and he would lie trembling with fear, and longing for morning. One night in particular he often spoke of, when the beautiful flush of the aurora in the heavens, instead of speaking to him of Divine beneficence, seemed to him to be the flames of judgment already kindling; and three times he got out and knelt beside his little bed, with tears and prayers beseeching God to "save his soul." No wonder that when once he learned to love and trust the Being he had so misunderstood, his constant theme should have been the great Father's tenderness and love.

He received his early education partly at Blundell's School, Tiverton, and partly at the Wesleyan College at Taunton; but few records remain of those schoolboy days. He would often say of himself,

laughingly, that "he was born older than other folks, and that he never knew what it was to be a boy;" but this was rather through the pressure of early cares and responsibilities than through any want of a fun-loving nature. He was a delicate boy, and never had sufficient strength to excel in cricket or any of the athletic sports of the playground; still he was always full of life and spirits, and a recognised leader among his companions.

When about twelve years of age he had a very serious illness, which threatened to terminate his life at once; and as he lay to all appearance unconscious of what was passing around him, a good man, a city missionary in the neighbourhood, who was a friend of the family, came in; and kneeling down by the couch on which he lay, poured out an earnest and importunate prayer that, if it was the Lord's will, he might be raised up again, and that his restored life might be devoted to God's service—that he might be a minister of the Gospel of Christ. And the boy heard every word of that prayer, and it made a deep and lasting impression upon his mind. He gradually came back to health and life with a deepened seriousness and a higher purpose in his heart.

And not long after this he was called to stand by his father's dying bed, and to look for the last time upon his face : and in that hour of solemn parting he was brought once more to face the awful mysteries of life and death ; and all the earnest lessons of his boyhood received a more profound significance in the light of that farewell. He could never point to any special moment when the great change for eternity was wrought ; it rather seemed as if the influence of the circumstances and surroundings of his daily life was moulding his character unconsciously to himself, and making the vessel " meet for the Master's use."

On leaving school he was placed in a house of business, for his thoughts were not at once turned to the ministry ; indeed, his natural shyness made him shrink from the idea of standing up to preach before a congregation, and he planned for himself a successful career in trade. He had his dreams of wealth, as other young and ardent natures have before a higher aim and purpose takes possession of them ; and, having plenty of energy and an indomitable will, he determined to be a rich man before he died.

But God had other purposes concerning him ; and in his eighteenth year, having come to a house of business in London, a sermon preached by the Rev.

C. H. Spurgeon, in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, was the means of leading him to consecrate himself entirely to the work of the Lord. The great place was thronged, and he was almost carried by the crowd up into the top gallery at the back; and there, squeezed into a window-recess, he listened to the words that were to change the whole current of his life. The text was a remarkable one, "Ye shall grow up as calves of the stall;" but nothing more than the text can now be recalled.

He was at this time a member of the Congregational Church at Tottenham, of which his brother was the minister; and one of his first direct personal efforts in the Saviour's cause was to stand at the door of a public-house with a handful of tracts, and try to persuade the men to go with him to the services at the chapel. He also gave up smoking that he might have a little more money to give to the church funds.

In 1867, when he was not quite eighteen years of age, he was admitted into Hackney College; and he often spoke of the four years he passed there as some of the happiest in his life. He delighted in his work; and the society of young men like himself, engaged in the same pursuits and animated by the same purpose, was very helpful and pleasant to him. A fellow-student writes of him at this time:—

“As his college friend I well remember how ardently he set about the work of making himself an efficient preacher. To preach was with him, I can very honestly say, the ruling passion of his life. He had a very strong desire too to begin his ministerial life at an early date ; why we can understand now, and see in it the directing finger of God. I remember, too, very vividly the interest he took then in the admission of children and young people into church fellowship; and one or two discussions we had in which he pleaded for ways and means by which the fostering care of the church might be extended to them more fully than at present.

“He had a bright and happy way with him which very much endeared him to some of us. Young and full of hope for the future, his mind crowded with plans and schemes to be worked out in some coming pastorate, it seems very mysterious to us all that he should have been carried away just as the promise of fulfilment was seemingly within his grasp.

“To myself the loss is one I shall never be able to fill up.”

It was while at college that the dreaded sorrow of his life came upon him. The beloved mother sickened and died, leaving him almost alone in the world.

His only sister had died some years before ; and the only one of his family now remaining to him was his brother James, the minister, twenty years his senior. For three months before his mother's death Henry gave up his college work to watch beside her bed ; attending to her wants with his own hands, sitting up half the night with her to soothe her nervous terrors—for she was tormented with doubts and fears, and said that nothing but his presence would keep Satan from harassing her—praying with her, and ministering to her with all a woman's care and gentleness. It was a strange and sad experience for the young minister, and doubtless helped to form in him that tender sympathising spirit which made his visits afterwards so precious to the sick and sorrowing. He would say sometimes in after years, " Every man who will do any real work in the world must have his forty days in the wilderness ; " and then, speaking of his long watch by his mother's dying bed, he would say, " That was my forty days."

He received several invitations from different churches during his college course, which he could not entertain ; but when, within six months of its completion, a unanimous and affectionate invitation came to him from the Congregational Church at

Luton, Bedfordshire, eager to be out doing his work in the world, he accepted the call ; and after a few weeks spent in seeking inspiration and strength amid the Scottish hills, he entered upon his first charge on the first Sunday in February 1870. It was a pretty Gothic church, seating over a thousand people, situated on a hill quite in the centre of the town, with its tapering spire making it visible for miles around ; and he took great pleasure in its beauty and attractiveness, and entered upon his work there full of high hope and expectation.

He was now only in his twenty-first year ; with a fair boyish face—light brown hair, rather long, and disposed to curl—and a bright rosy colour which gave every appearance of vigorous health. In figure he was of middle height, broad-shouldered and well-proportioned ; and he walked with a step of conscious power, as if he felt the world was all before him, and he had but to go on and conquer : yet even then at times the impression was so strong upon his mind as to amount almost to a revelation that he would die early. In the pulpit he looked so young that whenever he appeared in a strange church he would see a movement of surprise, and almost of amusement, go through the congregation ; and at Luton a High Church clergyman, who did not look with a

very favourable eye upon the new and popular young Dissenting parson, gave him the nickname of "the Baby Preacher:" and the look of simple innocent gravity that made this name not altogether inappropriate—the index of the child-like spirit within—remained with him to the very last day of his life. There was a kind of purity and dignity in his expression which made it no empty compliment that was once said of him, "I always thought when I looked at him that he had just such a face as a painter would take to paint the face of Jesus Christ."

In May of the same year he married Ellen Beddow, the eldest daughter of Josiah Beddow of Clapton, London; and about the same time he was ordained in his new church, and thus specially set apart to the work of the ministry. And now he threw himself into the work with all the ardour and enthusiasm that characterised him through life; preaching, attending meetings, and visiting, till his friends began to see that he was really going beyond his strength; but when urged to take a little more rest, as he was wearing himself out, he would say, "Better to founder in the storm than to lie and rot in the harbour."

He established a Children's Service in connection

with the church, and took great delight in gathering the little ones around him and talking to them in his lively interesting way; and his influence over children was unbounded. They would listen for hours to his beautiful dramatic versions of Bible stories, or his familiar talks about "White Robes," "The Rope of Faith," or "The House I live in." One little girl from the Children's Service, when he was leaving Luton, came into the vestry, and bursting into tears, said, "I feel as sorry as if my father was going away." Wherever he went the little ones would climb on his knee, or gather around his chair, and he never was happier than when surrounded by children. His own little Grace, his only child, found her greatest delight in nestling in his arms and hearing him talk to her; and when she was taken in to see the dear lips closed in death, her first words were, as she burst out crying, "O mamma! I shall have no one to tell me stories now."

But not only did the little ones gather round him, he won the hearts of young and old alike. Hundreds were drawn to listen to the eloquence of the young preacher, and were constrained to forget the messenger in his message; for the Gospel of Christ was the theme upon which he delighted to dwell, and the Word of God was with power to the conversion of

many souls. Men who had grown hardened in sin were brought to confess the power of the love of Christ. Old Jack the drover was known far and near as an example of profanity and drunkenness. One Sunday morning he strolled into the porch of the church where Henry Wonnacott was preaching; and then and there the Word of the Lord reached his conscience and conquered his rebellious heart, and from that day Jack was a changed man. All bore witness that he lived a different life; and every Sunday morning, neatly dressed, with a sunshiny face, he might be seen going down the road to meet the minister, and give him the first greeting.

One of the results of his ministry in Luton was that two young men went out from his church—as two did afterwards from the church in Hull—to give themselves to the ministry of the Gospel.

But Henry Wonnacott was not to remain quietly here. He had been only about two years and nine months at Luton when he preached at Albion Congregational Church, Hull, just to fill up a holiday Sunday—as was his custom whenever he was able—and immediately on his return home a deputation from Hull waited upon him, inviting him to take the pastorate. Albion Church had an honourable history as the scene

of the labours of the Rev. Newman Hall during the first twelve years of his ministry; and since then of the Rev. R. A. Redford, M.A. — now Professor of Theology at New College—for a period of eighteen years. It was, moreover, a large and beautiful building; but in his eyes its great attraction was that, being in the midst of a densely populated town, he felt it offered a wide sphere of usefulness; and, therefore, although in compliance with the earnest wishes of his people he at first declined the invitation, when a second deputation came from Hull he decided to accept the call; especially as nearly all the ministerial friends he consulted advised him to do so. The church at Albion, which had once been a mighty power in the surrounding district, had gradually declined of late years, owing to the fluctuations continually taking place in large towns, and only a comparatively small congregation met now in the noble building from week to week. But this only increased its attractiveness to Henry Wonnacott; for was he not more needed in Hull than at Luton, where the church was full and every organisation full of life and vigour? His was a mind that delighted in overcoming difficulties; and though at times he trembled at the thought of the increased responsibility, he believed it to be the Master's call,

and he was not one to shrink from any duty or any burden that was laid upon him by that Master's hand. And when in four brief years his naturally delicate frame sank beneath the weight of accumulated cares and labours, his faith in the Divine guidance did not waver; but he believed still that the same voice which had said to him in past years, "Live for Me," was now saying, "Die for Me;" and that belief made him calm and confident even in the valley of the shadow of death. His faith in the overruling care of the Great Father was a broad and comprehensive faith. He did not believe in a Providence of fits and starts. When any one spoke of a wonderful escape from sudden danger (preservation in a railway accident, perhaps) as a special providence, he would say, "Not so: the hand of the Lord was with those who died as surely as with those who were preserved."

He began his ministry at Hull on the 12th of October, 1873, still retaining his youthful appearance—so much so that when a stranger who had dropped in to hear him was asked by one of the regular congregation, "Well, and what do you think to our new minister?" he replied, "Ay! he's a fine lad!" A great change was soon manifest through his work. The chapel filled up fast; all the

agencies of the church received a fresh impetus; and a warmth and zeal, born of his own enthusiasm, were diffused throughout the place.

When he had been in Hull about a year the work of Messrs. Moody and Sankey began to make itself felt as a mighty power in our land; and the young preacher, who would let nothing slip which might render him more fitted for his ministry, went to Sheffield to see the work that was going on there. He had a good deal of conversation with Mr. Moody, and was very much impressed with what he saw; and from that time he always dated a great quickening in his own spiritual life. But from that time he also felt that his physical strength began to decline; the intense emotion seemed to wear out the delicate frame, and he would say that it was more than he could bear.

He went home and preached on the revival, and established meetings for special prayer; and a great awakening began among his people. He had a class for inquirers on Monday evenings, which was largely attended; and a good work began in the Children's Service, many of the little ones coming forward to declare their love to Jesus. He also started an open-air mission among the young men of his church, and at the close of his own services would go down into

the back streets and alleys of the town, and there seek to win the outcast and neglected for Christ. During the first nine months of that year more than seventy members were added to the church.

Soon after his return from Sheffield a series of meetings was held in Hull for special prayer and conference, with a view to the promotion of Christian holiness; and in these meetings Henry Wonnacott took great delight, and they served to deepen his earnestness and to confirm his faith. With a more intense devotion than ever before, he was able to consecrate all he was and all he had to the Saviour's cause; and those who saw the growing spirituality of his character, believed that he was being fitted and prepared for higher service in the ministry that he loved so well; they little dreamed that his consecration was like his Divine Master's, unto suffering and death. At one of the meetings he went up to the speaker at the close (Rev. G. Thornton, of Nottingham), and thanked him very earnestly for his words. He said, "You have helped me very much to-night. I have been able to give up my ministerial reputation, and I think that was the last thing I have been holding back from God." And now his earnest desire for his people, and his constant exhortation at every meeting of the church, was that all should be

really and truly consecrated to the Saviour's service ; and he would say, " If we were to go forth indeed as a company of blood-bought men and women, what should we not be able to accomplish for Christ ? "

And filled with an intense desire to win souls for Christ, he went about this time to take part in a special mission at Leeds, and for a week was engaged from morning till night in preaching ; conducting services in mills and factories by day, and in the evening preaching to crowded congregations in the various chapels, and conversing with inquirers until a late hour of the night. The factory services were especially interesting to him, when hard-featured, hard-handed workmen — many of whom had never before listened to the glorious gospel message—might have been seen with the tears stealing down their grimy faces, as the young missionary besought them to " believe in the love that God had towards them." It was work in which he delighted, and he threw his whole soul into it ; but the strain upon him was more than his strength would bear, and soon after this the fatal disease manifested itself which was so soon to terminate his ministry on earth.

Yet, in spite of growing weakness, immediately on his return from Leeds he set himself to bring about a series of similar services in Hull. He

longed that the town in which his lot was cast, and which filled so large a place in his heart, should share in the rich baptism of the Spirit of grace that was descending upon other places; and he took a room in the Protestant Hall, and invited all the ministers of different denominations to meet him in conference on the subject. But it was not until the autumn of that year that a series of united evangelistic services could be arranged. And as he had been the first mover in bringing about the meetings, he felt bound to do his very utmost in carrying them through; and every night but one he was preaching to crowded congregations in the largest chapels in the town, besides attending the prayer-meetings, and superintending his section of the house-to-house visitation; and all this with a rack-ing cough, and in spite of great languor and weakness. Many of his loving friends have said that they listened to him with real sorrow and pain, so evident was it that he was wearing himself out. And as soon as the services were over the break-down came. He was seized with bronchitis, and did not rally again until the following spring; when by medical advice he went down to Hastings to try if the warm southern air would restore the life and vigour which returned but slowly to him. But before this

time Mr. Fraser—who was not only his medical adviser, but his kind and tender friend through all his long and painful illness—had told him that he had valvular disease of the heart, from which he could never recover, but which with light work and an easy mind might not prove fatal for many years. At Hastings, in the bright sunshine and the fresh sea breezes, his health was sufficiently restored for him to return to his work; but only for a few weeks—when it became apparent to himself and to all around him, that it was impossible for him to go on unless he had a lengthened period of rest and change. And now his noble-hearted people rallied round him, and in all the generosity of love, they granted him leave of absence for six months; taking all responsibilities for that period upon themselves, and leaving him quite free to go where he would in search of health. And this kind offer he was constrained to accept—though sorely against his will—for it was his delight to be amongst his people, and it cost him many a bitter tear to have to go into “banishment,” as he called it, for so long. At the communion service just before he left, he came in and took his seat on the platform as usual, and tried to say a few words of loving farewell; but he broke down altogether, and was obliged to go into the vestry, and there let grief have its own way.

North Wales was chosen as a place where he could have rest and quiet, and enjoy the beautiful mountain scenery, in which he took great delight ; and, accompanied by his wife and little one, he went to Penmaenmawr, where the first six weeks were spent. And they were weeks of bitter conflict in the ardent soul of the young minister. It began to dawn upon him, though as yet but dimly, that his work on earth was closing ; and he would say, “ I sometimes think the Lord will never let me preach again ; and I have a hard battle to fight to be willing that it should be as God pleases.” And there at Penmaenmawr the hardest battle was fought and the victory won : and although he still clung to the hope of life and work, the constant attitude of his spirit from this time seemed to be, “ Father, *if it be possible*, let this cup pass from me ; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”

For some time past his nights had been disturbed by violent attacks of pain at the heart ; and these attacks never left him until about a month before his death. For more than a year he scarcely ever had a completely restful night ; but would have one or two, even three, attacks, lasting half an hour or more ; when he would pace the room in agony, or, leaning on the foot of the bed for support, would try

and brace himself to bear it. And at these times, the only thing that seemed to soothe and comfort him, was his wife's singing in the softest possible tones some of the hymns of faith and prayer he loved so well. Continually the nights of pain were soothed by singing; and amid his suffering he would join with fervent earnest tones in "Abide with me," or "Jesus, refuge of my soul."

On leaving Penmaenmawr he took a tour by easy stages through all the finest of the Welsh scenery; and although he could not walk much and had little strength to spare, he took a quiet delight in those grand old mountains and lovely valleys; and would sit on some stile, or on some rocky headland, for hours together, and watch the lights and shadows on the hill tops, or listen to the plash of the waves upon the shore. Nature was always full of happy lessons for him; and his eye and ear were ever open to receive some teaching that might serve to help or comfort those to whom it was his joy to minister.

But he could not rest even amid Nature's loveliest scenes, so far away from his chosen work, and the friends he loved so well. When his time of rest was only half accomplished, he turned his face once more towards home; and as he still felt that

country air and quiet were absolutely necessary to him, he took up his abode for the remainder of the time at Hornsea, a little seaport on the coast of Yorkshire, within a few miles of Hull. And here his strength seemed slowly to return to him; and once more the hope of years of happy labour rose before him. But just before the close of the six months he spent a week or two in London, and while there he went to see Sir William Jenner, hoping against hope that he might give him a more favourable verdict. But he was doomed to disappointment; for, after a most careful examination, Dr. Jenner said, "You must at all hazards give up your church. If you go back and begin to preach again, you will most certainly break up altogether." He heard the bitter truth with perfect calmness at the time; but when he and his wife—the sharer of all his sorrows—were once more alone together, his fortitude gave way, and tears that could not be kept back told the sorrow of that still ardent and undaunted heart over the fading of its fondest earthly hopes.

Yet, even in spite of all, he felt it was his work to preach; and come what might—be it at the cost of life itself—he must fulfil his mission: and though with little strength of body, still with unabated

courage and undimmed powers of mind, he went back once more to begin his last six months of work on earth, and perhaps the best and most effective work he ever did.

By the advice of his trusted friend, Mr. Fraser, he had taken a pretty little country cottage at Ferriby—a small village on the banks of the Humber, within easy distance of Hull—and the fresh air and quiet undoubtedly gave him that measure of strength which enabled him still to go on for a brief period. He always loved flowers and quiet country scenes; and in his pretty garden he found the greatest refreshment when wearied and cast down. The country around Ferriby is varied and beautiful; and it was delight to him to stand on the top of Swanland Hill and see the Humber, blue as any lake, sparkling in the summer sun, with the white sails flitting by, and the green slopes of Lincolnshire beyond; or to stroll along the river banks to a little sheltered copse where he could rest under the shadow of the trees, and enjoy the breezy solitude.

His Sunday work was now almost as much as he could find the strength to do, and to this he gave his whole solicitude. With most diligent and prayerful study did he prepare, week by week, his message to the church he was so soon to leave. Some prevision of

the fast approaching end seemed to give a deepening solemnity and earnestness to his words, and to make him speak each time as if it might be the last. On the first Sunday in the new year he preached from the motto text, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God;" and as the congregation joined in the concluding hymn,

"Who of us this coming year
Death's awful road shall tread,"

there were many in the assembly who could not but feel that most likely the beloved and honoured young minister would be one of the first to tread it; and he himself spoke calmly of its probability when he reached his home, and often afterwards referred to it.

His nights were still full of suffering, but full too of patience and faith. One night, in the midst of one of his attacks of pain, whilst praying aloud, as he often did, such a wonderful vision of God's love and faithfulness dawned upon his soul that he seemed quite overpowered by the excess of brightness, and could only murmur to himself over and over again, "The mercy of the Lord! the mercy of the Lord!"—and the memory of that vision never left him till he went to see his Saviour face to face.

Week after week found him at his post of duty and

of danger, fading visibly before the eyes of his congregation; each time with a more frail unearthly look, but still strong in spirit; preaching with a force and fire that seemed as if it would tear the fragile frame in pieces: and out of his own deep experience of sorrow and trust he was able to speak home to the hearts of struggling, toiling men and women with a power he had never possessed before. It was not a talking about faith and patience; it was a man's strong heart—which had struggled with the darkest problems of this sad earthly life, and had conquered—telling out its own story of love and grief to his brothers in the conflict and the storm.

But the journey was almost over, and rest was drawing near. Week by week the battle was going against him. Though in preaching all his wonted fire and energy returned to him, the reaction afterwards was very great. On Monday he could only lie and rest in utter exhaustion, generally out in the warm sunshine of those summer days; and three or four days were always spent in utter prostration and languor, before he once more felt that he could turn his thoughts to preparation for his work. And during a short absence from home, a violent cold which settled on his chest brought his weakened frame to the very lowest point. Only two more happy days of work

were given him; and all unwittingly—for even now he could not think his ministry was over—on the third Sunday in June, the almost dying man stood up to preach for the last time in his accustomed place. The memory of that last service will linger with many until their dying day; with such intense and solemn earnestness did he plead with those before him—especially the young—to come while life with all its possibilities was theirs, to Him who “gave his life a ransom” for the world. And in his closing prayer, as if a sudden flash of light revealed what lay before him, he commended himself and all in that assembly to the Saviour’s loving care, that, come what would of life or death, they might be safe with Him. “Trusting in Thee we will breast the winds and waves on life’s tempestuous sea; and when the last storm shall beat down upon us, and all earthly hope is gone, we will not fear; for we know that Thou shalt bring us safely over the foaming breakers, and up through the death narrows, into Thine own haven of peace.” Fit words for the closing utterance of this sad but trustful life.

That week he grew so much worse that he was obliged to confess it would be impossible for him to preach the following Sunday; and he decided to take another fortnight’s rest—the remainder of his

summer holiday—hoping that he might then once more be able to resume his work. But he grew daily weaker, and his laboured, panting breath made it impossible for him to think of standing up to preach.

And now he felt at last that he must face the step which he had so long dreaded, and resign the pastorate of his beloved church. Dr. Fraser gave him hopes that with a year's complete rest he might be so far restored as to take a little country charge; and feeling that it was inevitable, he wrote a pathetic and tender farewell to the church at Albion. He seemed content, and did not give way to anxiety or grief, for he said, "the Lord had done it, and His will was surely right;" but yet it was as if the strongest link on earth was severed—as if the great purpose which had kept alive the flickering flame of life was now withdrawn—and from this time he had nothing to do but die. The resignation was accepted by the church, with the strongest expressions of attachment and sorrow: there was no alternative: but when he received the news, though he heard it with perfect calmness, his already stricken heart was broken. He said, "I thought my resignation would never be accepted. I did think the Lord would let me die in harness." He never rallied again. Something in the heart gave way, and water gathered on the chest.

The difficulty in breathing became most distressing, and he could get no rest by day or night. Still there was nothing of the repulsive side of death about this slow decay: all was calm and peaceful as the approach of evening on a summer day. The doctor would go away after seeing him and say it was such beautiful dying, that all who loved him should wear a white rose for him, instead of putting on mourning.

Once again, with feeble faltering steps—leaning for support on the arm of his wife—he passed slowly down the little lane which led from his garden gate to the Humber bank, and there gazed wistfully out upon the waters lying tranquil at his feet in the glow of sunset: and those who noticed the weak stooping form, thin and worn—with fair youthful face still beautiful, though bearing the impress of death—felt sure that he had looked his last upon the outside world. A few more times he reached a sheltered seat outside the cottage door in his little garden; and then he grew so weak that he could only be wheeled in his arm-chair from one room to another. He was not called to lie and wait for death as some are called to do; but to the very day before he died could take his usual place in the warm south window of the sitting-room, looking out upon the Humber and the Wolds beyond. The painful gasping breath would not let

him lie down for a moment ; but he was obliged to get what rest was possible propped up with pillows. He would say, " I feel as if I were drowning. I must go under. Oh ! this is a fight."

Life was very sweet to him, and he could hardly realise that he must die so young. " Just think," he said, " only twenty-seven, and the heart failing ! " and then he would say, " Oh ! death is an awful thing. I go to prove the mystery. Pray that I may have an easy passage."

But although sometimes cast down and troubled, many words of confidence and hope are treasured in the hearts of those who watched the daily dying. " God is love," he would say ; " that seems the only rock I have to rest upon. People talk about ' the promises.' I do not find my comfort in the promises of God. If I love and trust a friend I do not want him to make me any promises ; his character is enough for me."

When one was speaking to him of the apparent need of the churches for such lives as his, he said, " I could not pray that I might be restored for the work's sake. God does not need me or any other man."

Once, when talking of heaven, he said, " I think we shall find it will be very different from anything

we have conceived of it. But to be free from sin! That will be the joy of heaven! It is that that troubles me now."

And another time the secret of his brief devoted life was told in his own pathetic words: "What a wonderful character is Christ's! How beautiful! *It has been the inspiration of my life.*"

The last day and night were indeed spent on the very border-land of heaven. He would say to the loving wife and brother who watched beside him, "Nothing seems to soothe me but hearing you sing or read to me:" and all those painful closing hours were cheered by hymns and prayers and Scripture words of strength and comfort.

Several times he spoke of his intense desire that the young people in his congregation, whom his voice had failed to reach, might now be won to seek and find the Saviour; that, "if possible, he might do more good by his death than by his life."

"Sing to me," he would say; "sing me something about sinners." . . . "A sinner saved! Put that upon my tombstone. Put no words of praise for me." Even in his sorest pain he would turn to his sobbing wife and say, in his tender loving way, "Precious Ellen! Poor darling, it comes so hard

upon you. If it were not for you and Gracie I would be glad to go."

He wished very much to see his little girl again, who was away in the kind care of friends, and could not be sent for in time. Most earnestly did he pray for her on that last night, committing her into the heavenly Father's keeping; and when the morning light began to break—forgetting for the moment that she was not in her little bed upstairs—he said, "Had you not better fetch the little pet down? You'll not trouble to dress her to-day, will you?"

Again he said, "Sing! Sing 'Nearer my God to Thee: '—his favourite hymn; and with a trembling voice the sorrowing wife sang softly through the words of holy aspiration—

"Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee—
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be
Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee."

Even to the end he clung to life, and trusted that the God he served was able to bring him back from the very gates of death; and that last night, in earnest pleadings, he besought that, if it might be, God would raise him up again—as he said, "For the strength-

ening of his own faith, and of the doctor's faith, and of the faith of the churches that were praying for him." (There had been special prayer for him both at Luton and Hull.) But it was not to be; and wondering, but still unshaken, he was obliged at last to accept the Lord's decree. About an hour before he died, stretching out his hands, he cried, "O Lord, hear the prayers, thousands of prayers, that have been offered:" and then, as if feeling the sentence of death within, and that he could no longer shut his eyes to it, he turned to his wife and said, "The Lord says, No!" and then, hushing all his doubt and disappointment to rest upon the bosom of the All-perfect Will, he added, "and if the Lord says 'No!' it must be right, must it not?"

They were almost his last words. Another hour of restless tossing—then a short sharp cry of agony, and a few sobbing breaths—and the struggling spirit, so long beaten back in the conflict, burst its bonds of mortal weakness, and entered the unwearied service of the skies.

"He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him; even length of days for ever and ever."

Thus lived and died a young and earnest soldier of the Cross. In the world's eyes, a life of failure and

defeat; perhaps in the eyes of God and of His angels a richer and more prosperous life than many of the world's successful men. Our eyes are dim. We cannot always discern between failure and success; but surely God will take no life, committed to Him in the free full trust of love, and cast it from Him a blasted broken thing upon "the void." On that day, when the issues of this mortal life—which surely stretch far out into eternity—shall be unfolded, and all the mystery that wraps us round shall fade like mountain mists in the full tide of morning; surely then many a young life which men call wasted—early ended in the place of trust and duty—shall be seen to have blossomed out into a full-orbed manhood, where no blight can fall upon it and no storm assail. This life is but a training-time for future services and triumphs; and death is not a final barrier, but a door of hope. Those who have gazed upon the Cross, until in some dim way they saw its divine and wondrous meaning, can call no life wasted that is formed in any measure on the pattern of the Lord's, though it lead to nought but suffering and death: and in the white-robed multitude before the throne, there will not be wanting those who heard the Gospel message from the lips of this young apostle, to arise and bless the God of heaven that he lived *and died.*

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- “ ‘ He is not dead,’ but only lieth sleeping
In the sweet refuge of his Master’s breast ;
And far away from sorrow, toil, and weeping ;
‘ He is not dead,’ but only taking rest.
- “ What though the highest hopes he dearly cherished
All faded gently as the setting sun ;
What though our own fond expectations perished
Ere yet life’s noblest labour seemed begun.
- “ What though he standeth at no earthly altar ;
Yet in white raiment on the golden floor,
Where love is perfect, and no step can falter,
He serveth as a priest for evermore !
- “ Oh ! glorious end of life’s short day of sadness !
Oh ! blessed course so well and nobly run !
Oh ! home of love and everlasting gladness !
Oh ! crown unfading, and so early won ! ”
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PART OF THE FUNERAL ORATION

Delivered by the Rev. JAMES SIBREE, before a crowded congregation at the funeral service in Albion Church, Hull, before proceeding to the grave.

It is with a full heart, and many misgivings, that I yield to the request of my brethren to take this more prominent part in these solemnities. At this time, and in this sacred place, many voices come to us. One from the throne of our Father in heaven, "Be still, and know that I am God;" "My ways are not your ways, and my thoughts are not your thoughts." Another from yonder sepulchre, whither we are about to wend our way, carrying our heavy burthen—"I am the resurrection and the life; if any man believe in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and I will raise him up at the last day." Another from this vacant pulpit: this says, "Cry; and I said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass; and the goodliness thereof is as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, the flower thereof fadeth away. Surely the people is grass." "Blessed are the dead

which die in the Lord ; from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, for they do rest from their labours."

These voices, though familiar to us, and often indiscriminately applied, can never lose their Divine energy and sweetness. They come to the Christian mourner fresh as the opening flowers in spring, welcome as the light of day, and thrilling as the softest music on the midnight air. But there is yet another voice. It comes from those lips now closed in death—those lips, the echo of whose sweet persuasive tones seems yet to vibrate within these walls. "I have finished the work given me to do." "My days are past. My purposes are broken off; even the thoughts of my heart." "Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent." "I have cut off like a weaver my life." It was only within a few hours of his departure from us that our dear lamented brother was brought to utter these words—"My days are past," "Mine age is departed." He clung to life with a tenacious grasp. He could not believe for a moment that within that frail tabernacle, enclosing so strong a spirit, there could be read "the sentence of death." "That be far from me," would his loving heart whisper, "to leave wife, and child, and brother, and people, and the Master's harvest-field, so wide, and so few to

gather in sheaves to His garner !” The “thoughts of his heart ” were to live and labour long, till the sun should go down late at eventide. The “thoughts of his heart ” were to build up this Zion with souls, and make her influence to be felt far and wide. But He whom he loved so well and served so faithfully had other thoughts concerning him. He has done all that was given him to do. He has finished his course. He has kept the faith. He has been faithful unto death. He gave his best, his all, to Christ. Let us ever remember that a life well spent is a long life, whether its years be many or few ; and that every life is to be measured by deeds, not by years. Under such a heavy trial as this we dare not refer to second causes, but with a submissive spirit, and to “magnify the grace given to him.” He was never robust physically, but he was strong in spirit. He gave no heed to the cry, coming from those who saw his willingness but feared his weakness, “Master, spare thyself.” He felt he must work. There can be little doubt that his Leeds mission work, some twenty months since, when he preached to some thousands, and stood as a young prophet, with lifted arm and tender tones, calling the stalwart labourer from the hot furnace, and the pale-faced weaver from his loom, to hear the message of a Saviour’s love,

was the fatal period in which was laid the foundation of that slow but fell disease which brought him down to death. Let us not repine at this. He who sent him on that errand of mercy knew well the cost; and how many jewels will adorn his crown as a recompense of reward?

It is not given to me to form any estimate of our lamented brother's powers or characteristics as a preacher, never having had the privilege of listening to his voice from the pulpit. These, however, must have been considerable, or he would not have filled the position to which he was called by the members of the church assembling here. One of our ministers in London, who knew him well, said, "He was a born preacher." He was born, like his Divine Master, if I am rightly informed, not only "to feed the flock like a shepherd," but—a more especial gift—"to gather the lambs in his arms and carry them in his bosom." I am able only to utter a few words as to the prominent features of his moral portrait. He was a man of God. His spirit was devotional. He lived near the fountain of holiness. In his prayers he led his fellow-worshippers right to the throne of God and the Lamb. His frequent approaches to the unseen world gave his countenance a heavenly cast. To my mind he had more of "that

disciple whom Jesus loved" than any young minister I ever knew. I may safely affirm of him what was said of Archbishop Leighton by a friend, "In all my intercourse with him I never saw him in any other frame of mind than that in which I should wish to die." But he was not only devout, he was ardent. When told by his physician that he must rest for a whole year his heart sank within him. It was the icy chill of death to his spirit. Earth became a blank, and with the prophet he could say, "It were better for me to die than live." A short respite was given to him; a few months' toil in the vineyard were vouchsafed to him; and many of you are witnesses how well he used them, and how bravely he fought against all premonitory symptoms. But the decree had gone forth; and when he knew it was his heavenly Father's will that he should depart, with the spirit of a little child he committed his all to "Him who doeth righteously."

"Oh! were this all of these few years—
The end of all thy loves and cares—
What hand could then e'er wipe our tears?"

But no! thy service is not ended. Thou art promoted early—alas! for us, too early—to that bright world of which it is written, "There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb

shall be in it ; and his servants shall serve him : and they shall see his face ; and his name shall be in their foreheads."

And now, sainted, beloved brother, farewell—beloved for thine own sake ; beloved for thy work's sake ; beloved for all that was in thy large heart to do in connection with us thy fellows in this great vineyard. Thou hast left behind thee "a sweet savour of Christ." We will cherish thy memory. We will do thee honour, though thy course was so brief, thy stay with us so short, and our knowledge of thee so limited. Those who knew thee most loved thee best. They can bear witness that thy zeal was no fitful blaze ; that thine efforts to save souls were no feeble essays ; that thy way heavenward was marked by no laggard steps. It was "in thine heart" to do more for thy Lord. Thy spirit was willing, but thy flesh was weak. With truth thou couldst say, "Holy and righteous Father ! the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

And now we go to the grave. The soft, gentle hands of women will strew flowers on thy bier, and weave and hang garlands on thy monument—emblems of thy moral beauty, thy spirit's fragrance, and thy transient life. But thou hast left behind thee more enduring memorials, in thy Christ-like example and

the souls which thou didst win to Jesus! Who does not cry, "Help, Lord! for the godly man ceaseth, and the faithful fail from among the children of men."

An immense concourse of people accompanied the funeral procession to the cemetery, on the outskirts of the town; and the sight of so many hundreds around the grave, proving by their sobs and tears the grief and affection of their hearts, will never be forgotten by those who saw it.

And the grave itself was made beautiful by a shower of rosebuds and other flowers, thrown in by the loving hands of little children.

SERMONS.

GOD IS LOVE.

“God is love.”—I JOHN IV. 8.

THE same pen that wrote “God is Light” writes now “God is Love;” and the one declaration is the necessary counterpart of the other. Taken together they present a whole, a complete truth. God is not only the great intellect of the universe, He is also the Great Heart; He is not only the infinite of thought, He is also the infinite of feeling; not only is He pure, searching, mysterious, glorious as light, He is also tender, forgiving, and affectionate as love.

Light and love made up John’s beautiful and perfect conception of God. Light for the mind and love for the heart; light to illumine, love to comfort; the silvering of light to blot out darkness, the warm glow of love to create summer. He learnt both from Jesus Christ. Leaning on his bosom, light shone upon him from Christ’s face, whilst love throbbed beneath him in Christ’s heart. Searching that face with eyes of love, he beheld the “brightness of the Father’s glory;” reclining on that bosom with

sympathetic heart, he felt the depths and tenderness of the Father's "love." And John's theme ever afterwards was light or love. His Gospel opens with words of "the true Light," "the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;" whilst his Epistles breathe the fragrance and speak the music of love.

It is to us the most blessed revelation which says "God is love." If we were mere minds, then might we, perhaps, rest satisfied with the knowledge that "God is light;" but having hearts that sorrow and eyes that fill with tears, we long to know further that "God is love." Light is beautiful; it is gladdening to the eye and to the heart; it flies towards us like God's angel from the skies; but light of itself is not enough. It were a poor thing for this earth if the sun gave it only light,—soon it would be clothed in the whiteness of universal snow, relieved only by the azure of glacial ice, and in the cold clear dazzling glare the life of ocean and continent would die. The earth would not cease to be; it would roll on, a fair and beauteous star among the worlds, but no life would stir in its cold magnificence, no voice would break the stillness of its icy solitudes—it would roll on, a splendid sepulchre, *through* the skies. Light of itself is not enough.

Life wants something more than light. No life can be matured apart from warmth. Were God only light we might be spotless as snow, chaste as crystals, beautiful as blocks of ice; but the best and highest things in our natures would die—there would be no warmth of friendship in our grasp, no pity flowing in tears of sympathy from our eyes, no sacrificing love in our hearts: our minds might become glorious, but our hearts would be empty and dead. And therefore, inasmuch as to be loving is better than to be knowing; inasmuch as a tender sympathetic heart is higher than a mere scholastic mind; inasmuch as sacrifice is profounder than wisdom, and the cross sublimer than philosophy,—inasmuch is the knowledge that “God is Love” better to us than the knowledge that “God is Light.”

This higher revelation of God is one to which in these times we are growingly susceptible. The world is more sympathetic with this view than it ever has been before. The current of theological thought has left behind that rocky, tortuous, narrow channel, through which it flowed, for the sunny slopes and flowery meadows that reach down to the joyous sea. Time was when Christendom was gathered at the foot of Sinai—that mount of black-

ness, and darkness, and tempest—and the voice of its thunders, and the flash of its fires, made men's hearts tremble and faint; but now we have crossed over from Sinai to Calvary. A thousand influences, some secular, some sacred, have trained us to a deeper tenderness and a profounder perception of the Divine might and glory of love. We delight now to gather round the cross: there are a few, only a few, who still linger at Sinai; but the great company are bowed in tears at Calvary. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God." The world has seen God as a lawgiver, as a ruler, and as a judge; it is now learning to utter the Master's prayer, "Our *Father* which art in heaven."

And this supreme truth concerning God is written and re-written on all His works. Love has left its signet on all that He has made. Look abroad upon this world of ours; fashioned so beautifully, furnished so luxuriantly, filled with such lovely sights and sounds: a world canopied by the sky, carpeted by the grass, perfumed by the flowers, ornamented by tree and fountain, varied by mountain and valley, musical from the roll of the sea to the very rustling

of the corn—look around upon this world and you cannot but feel that it proclaims a benevolent and beneficent Creator.

Albeit there is much suffering—for vicarious death is the basis of the world's life, (that principle, carried up and glorified in the Cross, rules in nature as well as in grace)—yet the purpose of glorious beneficence is attained. True, there are some facts which looked at by themselves seem to point to a different conclusion;—there is the condition of fish in the sea, where one is the prey of the other; the condition of the beasts in the forest; and the life of the insect world, created with such prodigality and destroyed apparently with so little concern; breathing, sentient life seems to be placed beneath our very feet, and every step in the field or forest carries death in its tread;—but then, what know we of the universal order moving onward through its ages and cycles? Isolate that Cross, with its cries of woe, its thorny crown, its riven side, from the place in which it stands, and what a dark speech it is to the universe concerning the fate of purity and the righteousness of God! Yet we know that love is seeking its end through that anguish, and is being glorified in that unutterable sorrow. The Cross had been the most awful mystery—the wreck of all hope

and faith, the dark rock of despair against which men would have dashed out their lives, feeling, that if sinlessness could perish so, then atheism were the wisest creed—but that its infinite secret has been told us. And after that, for the interpretation of whatever mystery there is in God's dealings, men who have learnt the Cross are prepared to wait!

Oh ! yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill ;

* * * *

That nothing walks with aimless feet,
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void
When God hath made the pile complete ;

That not a worm is cloven in vain ;
That not a moth, with vain desire,
Is shrivelled in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain."

And whilst we wait, ten thousand voices are chanting to our ears that "God is Love." Why the principle of suffering pervades the creation we do not know; but that joy which we constantly see born of suffering is to our hearts the prophecy of the end; whilst the simple fact that a creation is, we take as proof which cannot be denied of the love of God. Why did He create at all? Why did He not dwell solitary—complete in the joy of His own

eternal life? Why gather a universe of worlds around Him, and charge Himself with the care of all their innumerable lives? Every shining world that joins in the festival around His throne tells of a yearning in His heart to share His bliss with others! And there they are—not a few, but countless as the leaves of the forest, as the glittering spray of the waves—there they are, folded in the sunlight of His face: and nightly there sweeps down into our souls the chorus of their eternal song, “God is Love.”

And if, leaving the works of God, we turn to His government of us, His arrangement of our life, the testimony is still more clear. Notwithstanding that sin has thwarted His first intentions, the instances of His parental fondness are unmistakable. Take for example the institution of the family. The family is not man's thought, but God's. All the gentleness, the tender ministering, the refined and elevating pleasures, the strong self-sacrificing affection, of which the family is the sphere, is the premeditated thought of God. Home was first formed in paradise. Next to life it was God's best gift to man. Sin has left little that was pure unsullied, little that was beautiful unmarred; but perhaps less sullied and less marred than ought else that has been given us is God's

thought of home. And there are homes proclaiming to the world that God is Love. Homes bright with filial love and parental devotion—homes where the weary find rest and the sorrowful comfort—homes where the sacrifice of the Cross is perpetually enacted, and love goes laden with the sorrows and sins of others. And when I see amid sin's depredations, God's institution of the family as a place of peace amid the bursting storm, as a point of brightness amid sin's blackness of darkness; when I remember that home is the sweetest word in every language, the fondest memory in every heart, the best loved syllable on the human tongue; then I find in it evidence incontrovertible, that God, who designed home, is "Love."

Take again the fact of childhood. Has the tenderness of God to men never struck you as you have looked into the happy radiant face of a child? God has written His love in invisible characters on childhood's careless brow, in childhood's laughing eyes, and in childhood's years of immunity from sorrow. The Great Shepherd takes the lambs in His arms. God suffers not the cross of sorrow to be bound upon tiny shoulders. He keeps open the gates of heaven as the little travellers come down

life's pathway, and "heaven lies about us in our infancy." No sorrow can press heavily upon a child. Calamity may fall upon his home, death may strike his friends, but he will not realize it, and God means that he shall not. You may lead him to the deathbed of his mother, but he will not understand the coldness; and before the daisies have grown upon her grave, his playthings will amuse him as much as they did before. And in giving us this immunity from life's great sorrow and trial, the Father manifests His love. Not only every home, but every child in every home proclaims that "God is Love."

And this is not all. Witness the love of God in respect to the suffering and sorrow of our lives. It were easy, I know, to draw a dark picture of the sufferings of the world, which, keeping out of sight the fact that sin is the author of suffering and not God, should proclaim anything rather than that God is wise and good. And, perhaps, sometimes *we* have done this. We have summoned courage to look upon the sufferings of the world—to go through, in thought, its asylums, and lazar houses, and hospitals, to look upon its pain in a thousand forms, and its sorrow in measure a thousand-fold; we have

bent down our ear and have listened to the prolonged groan from the world's lips, and turning away, have felt it hard to believe that God is Love. Yes, if God had ordained it all it would be hard. If He had exercised His power and wisdom to secure that every town and city should be cursed with suffering, it would be hard; but if, as revelation tells us, sin is the author of suffering—if sorrow and death are the punishments of transgression—then the testimony is not that God is cruel, but that man is evil.

Yet in the greatness of his mercy God has interposed himself on our side against it. He has attempted on all sides to assuage our grief. To me the healing influences of time are the exquisiteness of tender mercy. We had no right to expect but that the punishment inflicted would be untempered by love. Yet mark God's anxiety to relieve, and to mitigate, and to assuage our pain and grief. Has He not ordained that the broken bone shall join and the wound in the flesh shall heal? has He not arranged that the sight of suffering shall call forth sympathy, and that sympathy shall be as balm to every wounded heart? has he not stored the earth with medicine to alleviate the sharpness of pain and the virulence of disease, and filled us with such strength of

life that from the very gates of death man can go back to health and strength? And what means this, but that God pities and loves us?

And he does not only mitigate sorrow, and relieve suffering, but that which remains He turns into a cause of joy. The path of sorrow He has ordained shall lead to the kingdom of gladness. Sorrow and suffering, to what sympathy do they lead us; to what gentleness, and patience, and trustfulness do they bring us! How ripe do they make us in experience; how do they clear away mere flimsy sentimentalities and make us strong; what insight into ourselves, into others, into truth do they give us!

And what could parental fondness do more? Love is stamped not only upon our joys, but also upon our griefs. Life is full of mercy and beneficence. We carry in ourselves the testimony of God's love. Home with its joys, childhood with its gleefulness, nature with her healing ministry, and time with its sorrow-healing hand; the kindly influence of our sorrows, and the wise overruling of our griefs—all join in one unwavering declaration that "God is Love."

But it is when we stand at the Cross that we reach the deepest meaning of John's words. Love is best

known through its sacrifices. The cross which love can take up is the true measure of its strength. Looking upward love becomes reverence, as from the child to the father ; but looking downward to that which is weaker, as from the father to the child, it takes the form of sacrifice. The essence of such love is vicariousness. Its very life flows forth in ministering and vicarious suffering. To do, to bear, to live for its objects, is all it asks ; and God is love. And the life of God, it is a life of eternal sacrifice. Succouring, sustaining, blessing ; that has been His through all the ages. There is not a world which does not rest upon His bosom ; there is not an insect in any world which is not a receiver of His love. Forth to the whole creation, He has been pouring His benedictions, and will for ever pour them. And the profoundest meaning of John's words is that God is sacrifice. "Herein," says he, "is love ; not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and gave his son to be the propitiation for our sins." He declares the highest sacrifice possible in fact, or possible in conception, and then catches sight of the grandest truth ever revealed to the heart of mortal—God is sacrifice—"God is Love."

And "*God* only knows the love of God." The infinite alone can understand the infinite. What

that love will do, what it will bear, what it will suffer for its children—none but God himself can know. “The first-born sons of light desire in vain its depths to see.” No mind of man or angel can comprehend it. As for us we are baffled sometimes by the strength of human love, how can we think to know anything of the love of God! We have felt some of us how unsearchable is a mother’s love; multiply a mother’s love by so much as God is greater than the mother, and think of the love of God. Remember your mother’s heart and think of the great God over all; to whom she with all her love was as nothing; a poor earthly creature, frail and sinning, a creature of the dust; and from the mother’s heart learn of the heart of God—of His heart infinite in its love.

And what wonder then that we can speak of a redemption. To redeem! that is love’s work; to save! that is love’s delight. No sooner had man fallen than he was led from the forfeited paradise to the foot of an altar; and with that leading God’s work began. From that hour God has been entering into sacrifice for man’s salvation. Patiently did He teach men; with tender mercy did He bless them; with infinite long-suffering did he bear with their rebellions. Four thousand weary years did the

sinning world hang upon His breast before His love was told upon the cross. Not a tear fell, not a sigh was breathed, not a curse rang through the air, not a crime was perpetrated by man, but that He knew it all and loved on notwithstanding. Thousands of years of accumulating sacrifice rolled on to culminate in one great manifestation. And there—there in the midst of the ages—there in the fulness of time—there stands the cross. Sublime, awful cross! Emblem of amazing inconceivable love! God has put His person, *Himself* into the sacrifice. The sun is darkened, the earth rends, the dead awake,—all nature stands aghast. Not till then did the angels know the strength of the love of God,—not till then did the seraphim see into its infinite depths,—not till then did creation know its God. That cross reveals to us our God: and bearing its testimony with God's works, with God's moral government of man, it declares with an emphasis which all must heed, and language which all must understand, the supreme truth for us to-day that

“GOD IS LOVE.”

IF ANY MAN THIRST, LET HIM COME UNTO ME AND DRINK.

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink.”—JOHN VII. 37.

THE feast was the Feast of Tabernacles, or, as it is otherwise called, the Feast of Water ; and with it was incorporated the Feast of the Ingathering or Harvest. It was *the* great festival of the Israelitish nation, and was held to commemorate the journeying of their forefathers across the Arabian deserts, where they dwelt in tents and booths, and were often supplied by God with water—that great want of the desert—from miraculous sources. It was the especial season of national rejoicing ; and the joy, so far from being restrained or moderated, as might be expected in religious festivals, was of the most wild and extravagant character. For seven entire days the whole city dwelt in booths constructed of boughs having upon them the fresh leaves and often heavy with fruit. The city itself was decorated profusely with boughs and trees—every street, every open place, every court, even the very battlements on the walls—so that a merry-making forest town almost hid the real

city, and the height of Zion seemed transformed into a migratory camp. Throughout the day, and far on into the night, the Israelites made merry in their booths ; processions bearing branches of fruit trees, especially of the palm and citron, marched continually through the streets ; music from every instrument and song from a city's voices rose in loud choruses again and again ; whilst the temple upon its favoured height was the centre and focus of the joy, for it was the scene thrice daily of the most imposing services of what was at all times an imposing worship.

Two causes contributed greatly to the Jew's delight. First, his harvest had been gathered—for the feast was held in autumn—the vine had yielded him her clusters, the fig tree, the palm tree, the citron, and the olive had filled his storehouses with abundance ; and with the increase of his substance there was naturally an increase of joy. But more than this—all were the more cheerful and happy because the great solemn day of national atonement had just been celebrated—celebrated but five days before ; a day of humiliation and repentance ; and now the nation in its members felt itself more than at other times freed from the sense of guilt. And so, with a full heart and with an unburdened conscience, Israel

entered gladly and rapturously into the jubilant seven days' banqueting of the feast.

But the temple claims at this time special attention. Morning and evening the altars smoke with sacrifices. During the seven days of the feast proper, no less than seventy oxen and over a hundred sheep were offered; but on the eighth day, which was the after-celebration—"the last great day of the feast"—there were offered only one bullock and seven lambs; but all that had been glorious in previous celebrations was gathered up and intensified in this sacrificing of the one sacrifice—typical, it would seem, in an especial manner of the one atonement and propitiation of the Cross.

But that which at this time concerns us most is not the immolation of the bullocks or the lambs, but the sacred libations or outpourings of water which formed a prominent part of the ceremonies. On every morning, after the morning sacrifice, a priest went, bearing a large and costly vessel of gold, and drew water from the fountain of Siloah, which rose from the side of the hill on which the temple was built. This was brought in festive procession through the Water Gate of the temple, where the procession was saluted by the sounding of trumpets, and borne amid the utmost rejoicings of the people into the temple's

inner courts. Here the priest stepped to the altar; the assembled multitudes shouted their plaudits, they sang their hallelujahs, and festal music from the array of trumpeters and harpers broke—like the crash of a storm, or like the peal of thunder among the hills, or like the boom of the wave upon the shore—broke, and rolled, and swelled through that vast arched and pillared temple, and all Jerusalem heard the sound:—and as the priest poured out the water into the perforated silver dish that it might stream down upon the altar, all Jerusalem was moved into one choir of song:—the temple rolled it to the city, the city rolled it back again to the temple, and the temple rolled it up to God. “He that never saw the rejoicing at the outpouring of water never saw rejoicing at all,” became a Jewish proverb—so exultant and ecstatic at that moment was their joy;—for that water spake to them of Horeb, where from the rock the stream gushed forth for their fathers; it promised to them the fertilizing rains which God should cause to descend upon their land in the coming year; but above all it reminded them of the time spoken of in the cherished prophecies of their faith, when God should “turn the thirsty land into water-springs,” when He should “pour out his spirit upon all flesh,” and when they,

delivered from all yokes and terrors, should “draw water with joy from the wells of salvation.”

And it is more than probable that it was at this outpouring of the water that Jesus stood and cried, “If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink.” Stepping from His position amongst the crowd whom in various ways He had been instructing, He stands forth in prominence; and calming, perhaps by the uplifting of a hand, perhaps simply by the majesty of His presence, that great tumultuous joy, He cried—and the term implies vigour and vehemence—cried with the same voice which was heard afterward by Galilean winds and waves as they mingled in *their* storm of song; cried with the same voice which afterwards in its dying faintness split the rocks, and burst the prison-houses of the dead upon a neighbouring hill; cried—and methinks the voice by its tenderness and power rang further than their songs—“If any man thirst, let him come unto *me* and drink. He that believeth on *me*, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water!” Sublime picture is this of Christ proclaiming His own Messiahship! No sensuous, miraculous signs have awed that seething multitude to silence. There are no wonders in the skies, there is no trembling of the ground, no vision has fallen upon them

from on high. A man only stands before them,—a man in peasant's garb, a man from humble life, a broad-browed, hard-handed man,—and the gorgeous high priest upon the altar-steps must fain stand and gaze upon that man; the angry Jews among the throng must stand in silent thought, their eyes rivetted upon that man; there is a moral majesty in His presence that compels them to silent awe, awe that every moment is deepening into worship;—He has spoken and His words by a mysterious Heaven-sent power are working their way to a thousand hearts. O! gaze yourself upon that wondrous man! gaze till you feel His wondrous humanness—gaze till the human leads you upwards to the divine—gaze till like many before Him in that multitude, many who never saw His mighty works, many who never heard His words before—gaze till you can say to your neighbour who standeth by, “Of a truth this is the prophet,”—or, truer still, “This is the Christ!”

And if he be not the Christ, what epithet shall we apply to him? “If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on *me*, as *the scripture hath said*, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Evidently he claims to be the Messiah—intentionally he gives himself forth as the

one of whom the Scripture had spoken. If he is not the Christ, what is he? "Why," says one, "he is a mad fanatic." Nay, He cannot be a madman: that serenity, that majesty is not of madness. These words upon this page are not the ravings of a madman. "Why then," says another, "he hath a devil." Nay, He cannot have a devil:—"a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand"—devils are too shrewd to be their own destroyers. "Call him, then, an impostor." Nay, He cannot be an impostor. Men become impostors only when there is something to be gained: no man would feign to be the man of sorrows; a man who, it was prophesied, should be despised and rejected, a man whose life was to terminate with the shame and ignominy of the cross: he cannot be an impostor. "Arrest him, then, as a profane blasphemer." Nay, you cannot arrest Him; that was tried. "Then came the officers to the chief priests and pharisees" (so reads the forty-fifth verse), "and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man." Ah, their Roman armour was proof against the flying arrows of the enemy; it gave safety from the blow of the foeman's spear; but there was a tenderness, a searching, mysterious, indescribable power in the look of His kind eye

which went beneath the Roman armour and touched and subdued the Roman heart: there was a lightning which played upon His lips and flashed forth in His words sharper than a two-edged sword, dividing even the joints and the marrow. And those stout Romans, mailed and armed to the teeth—men who never quailed upon the battlements, men who would rather have died on battle field than be charged with cowardice—went back to those who sent them, to say with shame and confusion of face, “Never man spake like this man!” They could not touch the Galilean peasant until He Himself had said that his hour was come.

And what significant words are these. He not only claims to be the Messiah: His claim is to be divine. What mere man could dare venture upon such words as these? Imagine, if you can, one man representing himself as the fountain of bliss to all other men. Put these words into the mouth of a mere prophet, or teacher, or apostle. Conceive of David standing up before his nation and saying, “If any man thirst, let him come unto *me* and drink.” Think of Paul offering himself as the satisfaction to a soul’s unutterable longings, and deep, restless, infinite wants. Imagine an angel even coming to our sphere and presenting himself to a world of

fallen men and saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto *me* and drink." Why, in the mouth of any not absolutely divine, it savours of the most egregious and insufferable egotism ; but not only so, for inasmuch as it is at least an *assumption* of divinity, it becomes a piece of the most blasphemous self-assertion of which a creature can be guilty. Either Christ is God as he claims to be, or there is no epithet in the English tongue capable of expressing our indignation, our utter scorn, our severest condemnation upon the man, whatever be his other qualities, who attempted to foist such a belief as this concerning himself upon the world.

And yet Christ uttered these words without the slightest tremble or hesitation. Christ never prefaced his words with an apology. He uttered the most astounding personalities concerning Himself as simple matters of fact. The pronoun "I" was constantly upon his lips. No teacher whose teaching history records ever spoke so much about himself as Christ. And He never commenced to speak of Himself as a modest or a great *man* would speak of self if compelled to do so. He never prefaced his words with such a phrase as "It will seem, I fear, boastful, but circumstances compel me to say it," or, "It is not becoming to speak about one's self, but you urge

me to it." Quite the contrary of this. He Himself is often the sole theme of His discourse. All that He says radiates around Himself. With all the emphasis which comes from a consciousness of truth, He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in *me*, though he were dead yet shall he live." "I and my Father are one." "He that hath seen *me* hath seen the Father." "If any man thirst, let him come unto *me* and drink."

And it is no explanation of this personal teaching to say that Christ was a supreme prophet; a prophet's mission is to glorify his message, not himself. It is nothing to the point to call him a "social reformer;" reformers find their strength to lie in the assertion of principles, and they have found it needful to say (as witness Plato and Luther), "Forget *me*, but remember my words." "Let *me* be nothing that my system may be all in all." Nor does it make matters better to call him God's delegate upon earth; the office of a delegate or an ambassador is to represent the king; it is the very understanding upon which he goes that he will give up his own claims, be nothing in himself that his sender may be all in all. But Christ stands between the worshipper and God. He does not say, "Keep *God's* commandments," but

“Keep *my* commandments ;” not “*Love God*,” but “*Love me* ;” not “Worship *God*,” but He accepts worship Himself.

“If any man thirst, let him come unto *me* and drink :” not, “Let him go unto the Eternal Fount of joy and life :” not, “Let him wait upon the Infinite Spirit who has all fulness in himself :” not, “Let him come unto my system, let him obey my precepts, let him be in harmony with the truth which I reveal—and he shall find the eternal blessedness and the everlasting peace for which he craves.”

But, looking at the human soul with all its yearnings, with all its infinite outreachings after joy and peace and love ; with its illimitable range of aspiration and its eternal unrest of desire ; looking at the soul which nothing can satisfy short of the bosom of God, he says, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” Calmly, grandly, divinely he stands and appeals to whatever there is in the soul of want, whatever of hunger there is in the moral faculties, whatever of need there is in the imagination, whatever of craving there is in the affections, and he says, “I am the satisfaction of the soul : there are heights in me which you will never scale, there are depths which you will never fathom ; there is an infinity in my nature which the soul’s insatiable

craving can never compass; in me there is an ocean, a boundless, shoreless, unfathomable ocean, of profound and blessed life; I am a fountain which the world cannot exhaust, which the ages cannot diminish; if any man thirst let him come unto me and drink."

And is not this just that which the world has been wanting? Has not the world through all the ages been stretching out its arms of faith and love to clasp them round a brother human yet divine? Has it not cherished fondly in its heart of hearts the secret hope of some "strong Son of God, immortal love"? Have we not wanted such a saviour as Israel's Christ and the world's redeemer? Without Him has the earth any charm? has truth any power? is there anything beautiful in beauty? has heaven more of good than earth? Is not all cold, and cheerless, and dead? Are we not left in mystery, in ignorance, in hopelessness.

O brethren! be assured the world's unspeakable want has not been planted in its bosom to be unanswered and unanswerable! God has not created these instinctive yearnings simply to torment us. Isaiah, back in the dim ages of the past, interpreted this craving, and he descried the eternal purposes of *God* to fill it; for as he sang and wept over the

coming kingdom, he spoke of a "*Child*" that should be born, of a "*Son*" that should be given; he told of a "*Man*" who should be "as a hiding-place from the wind, a *Man* who should be a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Isaiah saw that God's great gift to men was not to be a cold system of ethics, a long list of morals, a lifeless category of precepts, but a warm, throbbing, sympathising heart in a living man. Old Simeon, too, when in the temple he took the young child in his arms, understood the philosophy of it all; and lifting up his eyes to heaven, while the tears streaming down his furrowed cheek dropped upon the child, he said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen *thy salvation*." Paul, too, grasped the significance of the plan when he said to the Corinthians, "We preach *Christ crucified*." Christ—not morality; Christ—not principles; Christ—not commandments. And therefore, too, did Christ say, when on the last day, the great day of the feast, He proclaimed his mission to the world, "If any man thirst, let him come unto *me* and drink."

And in what, then, consists our duty, seeing we have found the Christ, the Son of the Living God?

Clearly, sirs, our first duty is to embrace Him ourselves. We lie to our convictions, we throw discredit upon our manhood, we proclaim ourselves weak and wanting in decision, every moment we leave the Christ of God outside the door of our hearts. We are neglecting the highest good, and that knowingly ; we are carrying irreparable ruin into our souls, and that deliberately and wilfully ; we are guilty of unkindness, yea, of cruelty, to Christ Himself, whilst knowing Him to be the Christ we fail to receive Him.

And yet Christ appeals to us again this morning. There is a tenderness, a pleading, a very sadness in His tones, so long has He spoken in vain. Once more He says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Is there a soul athirst in this assembly? Is there one who is conscious of an unrest, an unsatisfied heart, an inward void? Christ calls to you. Is there a young man or young woman just waking up to life's mystery, life's opportunity, life's solemn flight? Christ calls to you. Is there one here who has proved by sad experience the painful emptiness of a worldly life, the after-bitterness of earthly pleasure, the hollowness and rottenness of the world's promises, and friendship, and wealth? Christ calls to you. Is there one here by

whose fireside there is an empty chair, in whose home there is a vacant crib, in whose memory there is the fresh remembrance of an open grave? There is One that calls to you. Is there one hungering and thirsting after righteousness, hungering and thirsting after abiding peace, hungering and thirsting for hopes and joys that will never fade? Christ is saying to you, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." If you want wisdom, if you want sympathy, if you want friendship, if you want salvation, if you want heaven—then Christ is the fountain, and to drink of the water which He giveth is to know thirst no longer, for it is in us "a well of living water springing up unto everlasting life."

But whilst it is our first duty and privilege to know Christ ourselves, it is clearly our duty also to make Him known to others. If there were many Christs, if there were many Gospels, if there were many ways to heaven, then might we perhaps be idle. But since there is only "one name given under heaven by which men can be saved," and we know that name—since we can say of One, "Of a truth this is the Christ!"—then by all that is sacred in our human brotherhood, by all that is valuable in the souls of our fellows, by all "the unsearchable riches" of the Saviour we have found, we are called

upon to proclaim His name and to make known His Gospel.

“ Shall we whose souls are lighted with wisdom from on high,
Shall we to men benighted the lamp of light deny ?
Salvation ! O salvation ! the joyful sound proclaim,
Till each remotest nation has heard Messiah’s name.”

Let there be no doubt as to this our duty. The claims of humanity urge it upon us ; the Cross, whereon there is a sacrifice for all, proclaims it to us ; the commandment of our Lord lays it upon our hearts. Send, O send the Gospel heralds to every land ! You who are increasing your wealth, you who are adding luxury to comfort, you who are sitting at ease in this highly-favoured land, this land of churches, of Bibles, of preachers—there are lands where they have never heard of the Christian’s Saviour ; there are peoples who have never known of Calvary’s cross ; there are languages in which was never read, “ If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” And yet the nations are athirst ! Witness them hewing out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water ! From the polished Brahminism of India down to the inhuman orgies of the savage, what have we but the evidence of the soul’s deep and unutterable thirst ? They thirst for liberty, they thirst for know-

ledge, they thirst for peace, they thirst for hopes to brighten the darkness of the grave—they thirst in fact for Christ. Send to them and tell them you have found the Saviour. Stop them in their inhuman rites, and beseech them “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.” Break in upon their cruel and wicked practices, and say unto them, “Do thyself no harm; believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” Disturb them in their vain philosophising, and tell them of One who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,” One who “died the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” Plant the Cross with its uplifted Saviour in their midst, and the love which has constrained and melted and subdued our hearts will also work on them, and Christ’s words shall be fulfilled, “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.”

Thanks be unto God! the kingdom of His Son is growing and shall grow. The streams from the fountain are flowing far and wide. Lips of men of every clime—lips speaking every language, and lips that speak no language but the broken speech of the savage—stoop to drink of its living streams. Lips that offer prayer to idols, that swear the oath of fealty to Mahomet, that repeat the shasters of India

country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods." Our possession and our non-possession of talents alike proclaim that God is sovereign. When the great God has left us—when He has gone away, as it were, into a far country, when He has withdrawn himself a while, leaving men to develop and work out the abilities He has given them—let us not imagine He has resigned His rule. A false reasoning proclaims that He has given up His kingship ; but the fact of His sovereignty is asserted in our very nature ; and our build, and capacity, and limits of power declare His rulership. He has distributed the talents in an unequal and diversified manner, and that distribution no man can ignore—it is the will of God that rules us. Therefore let not the man of five talents despise the man of two, nor the man of two the brother of one: what have we that we did not receive ? the five talents and the one talent are equally the gift of God.

- "To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one." There is no man without a talent. Let us be clear upon this point. God never sends forth a soul without some benefaction of goods. God never creates a responsible agent unendowed with energies, and capacities, and gifts,—and no child of

the Eternal ever goes forth without a patrimony, debarred from opportunities of usefulness and possibilities of glory.

The endowment may be small ; it may be only one talent ; but there it is. At our instalment into life God puts into our possession a portion of His goods ; He gives us a capital with which to trade ; He gives us germs of faculty and seeds of power to develop ; we are born to certain privileges, and opportunities, and services ; and the man does not live upon this earth who has not received some talent or talents from God. Light, air, sunshine—time, duty, sorrow—home, friends, the experience of the past—these things are our natural bounty. But God stops not there.

God's manner of blessing is "exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask or think ;" and His calculations are not with how little He can send us forth, but with how much ! and life must always be a solemn responsibility under the government of such a God. 'Tis almost a fearful stewardship—stewardship under One who blesses from eternal fountains, and whose measure of benediction is infinite love. The liberties, and appliances, and improvements of our modern age are so much increased advantage, and therefore so much increased respon-

sibility ! This Gospel with all its beneficent powers is a priceless talent committed to our trust. How is life made ten-thousandfold more responsible because of the Cross ! Seeing God has not withheld His own Son ; has not scrupled to crucify Him for us upon the tree—what arithmetic can number *our* talents ? “ Thanks be unto God,” exclaims the apostle, “ for his unspeakable gift,”—but let us remember that the unspeakable gift brings with it unspeakable responsibility, and confers unspeakable obligations ! The Cross solemnises life ! To live is momentous now that we have received the Son of God ! All other responsibilities are dwarfed now that we know *that* sacrifice,—that sacrifice for ourselves, that atonement for the world ! This is the chief wealth of God committed into the hands of men !

But that part of the parable before us compels us to assume the case of a man with only *one* talent. “ Unto one five talents, and to another two, and to another *one*,”—the minimum of power, and advantage, and possession. *One talent !* Well ! he is only responsible for one. He is not responsible for two, but for one !—no more and no less. The measure of what a man hath is the exact measure of what shall be required of him. The account against this man *is* for one talent ; and as Christ portrays him tried,

condemned, and cast out into the outer darkness, He would lodge in our hearts this significant lesson—that the non-use of the smallest talent is a crime; that neglect to employ the feeblest power is perilous to the soul!

Let us mark attentively how the case of this man stands. He is not a prodigal; a spendthrift; an evil-doer. He has not wasted his talent, squandered it away, or set it to bad uses: the charge against him is that he has set it to no use at all. The crime of this man is the common crime of doing nothing. He had just one talent, and he failed to employ it. “He went and digged in the earth,” and buried it out of sight and out of use. He preserved it? Yes. He kept it safe enough—but hidden there in the earth the world was none the better for it, the Church did not know of its existence; and whilst others were busy trading with their talents, he, sitting over the grave of his buried power, was carrying bankruptcy into his soul. He was forthcoming with the capital, but the interest was wanting; and it is not enough that a servant say unto his master when the harvest is past, “Here is the seed which thou gavest me; there thou hast that is thine.” The master wants not the seed but the harvest. Most unprofitable servant he who returns simply his talent: and whilst

others who have doubled their talents hear the "Well done" of their master and enter into the joy of their Lord, he under the most scathing condemnation is cast out into the outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

And I fear lest this should be a common case; because he appears to have reasoned upon grounds so usually taken. His ability was small, and he foolishly imagined that his responsibility would be waived. His attainments were humble, and he unwisely concluded that the world could do without him. There were difficulties in the way, as there were in the way of the men of five talents and of two talents, and he was "afraid"—afraid of publicity, afraid of criticism, afraid of responsibilities. Men of one talent generally *are* "afraid," but their fear looks in the wrong direction. If, instead of looking to man and being afraid, they looked to God and his demands and were afraid, then were their fears of a wholesome nature. Had this man, knowing how small were his abilities, been afraid lest when his Lord returned he should have but little to present to him, then he would have laboured the more diligently and conscientiously; but his was not the fear that stimulates, but the fear that paralyzes. "I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth."

He forgot that the same law of duty binding upon men of five talents is equally binding upon men of one talent. He failed to look around him in the world and see the power of littles illustrated in earth and sky and sea. Because his was but one talent he imagined he might be idle. He could not build up an empire ; he could not flash the light of genius across continents and ages ; he could not make discoveries that would revolutionise and introduce a new era—his was only one talent : but he *could* teach a little child to read ; he *could* expound in a simple way some truth of God's at a dying bed ; he *could* stand at the fountain of the water of life and cry out with the Spirit and the Church, "Come." There were ten thousand things that God had provided to be done by men of one talent, which men of five talents could not do. But he was afraid. He chose inglorious ease and wicked slothfulness. He would rather spend his labour in digging to hide his talent than exert himself to the same extent to use it.

He was a moral grave-digger, and his grave was dug not for a dead but for a living power ! And since his time his posterity have filled the earth with tens of thousands of such hapless graves. The graves of buried talents are to be found in every town and in every church. Men are their own undertakers

in this business. One-talented men may be seen almost everywhere, with the spade and pick-axe of some false argument or excuse entombing that very portion of themselves which alone is of any use to the world. They put on the vestments of a false humility, and read the funeral service over their opportunities of usefulness and all their possibilities of increase; and then they go aimless and purposeless about the world, until they come face to face with the judgment-seat to find that they must give an account of the talent committed to their trust. Useless men! Men who fulfil no function of usefulness in the creation. Empty ships floating about with the tide; machinery working to no purpose; living, thinking, redeemed spirits, aimless as the bubble in the air, yet hoping to float in in some way with the true workers and sacrificers of the world!

The crime of this man, then, was the crime of uselessness. To be useless may not appear to some of us in the light of a crime, but it is nothing less. It is an offence against God and against man. "Thou *wicked* and *slothful* servant" is the stern condemnation addressed to him. And why, but that his guilt is great? He *knew his duty* and he did it not. He was aware of the worth of his one talent, for he went and hid it. He understood well what his master would

require of him, as his own words plainly show, and yet he ventured to stand before him with his talent and say, "There thou hast that is thine." The negative evil of doing nothing becomes thus the positive evil of sinning against light and knowledge. And not only so, there has been waste, and loss, and desolation. The talent in the hands of another had yielded a return — universal wealth had been increased, the kingdom of heaven had been richer for evermore—and just as the tree which bears no fruit becomes a cumberer of the ground, drawing to itself the moisture and nourishment that might go to others, so the man who lives useless in God's world becomes a blight and a ruin in it. This man's negative evil becomes a positive crime.

And that happened to him which must eventually happen to all useless men—the little power he had was taken from him—"Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath ten talents." The reward of working is the power to work more; the penalty of not working is not being able to work. To disuse a power is ultimately to lose it; to employ it is to increase it. This is a law which operates in every department of life and action, and Christ has strikingly set it forth by representing the talent as taken from the useless servant and given unto the

one who had been most useful. Little as our gifts may be, they grow less as long as they are unemployed. Look at the blacksmith's sinewy arm; look at the athlete, as with head thrown back and expanded chest he races for the prize; look at the youth of Sparta, almost perfect in form and Herculean in strength; they all have increased their abilities by using them. Tie the blacksmith's arm in a sling for a month, and then see what his strength will be. Provide for the athlete a velvet couch, and let him recline there instead of training, and then let him enter the lists. Men know well enough in everyday life that power departs as the penalty of disuse. You may know a language to-day, but if you neglect it for five years your knowledge will show signs of perishing. You may be able to play the flute to-day—give it up for awhile, and your power as the penalty will depart.

And it is just the same with the higher powers and finer faculties of our nature. To-day you can respond to the touch of sorrow, you can enter sympathetically into the griefs of others, there is just a remnant of divinity in your nature;—great glorious gift the power of sympathy!—but that one priceless talent given you will depart unless you exercise it. To-day there is a fire of zeal kindled in your heart as

you behold the world lying in darkness and in the arms of the wicked one ; but that fire, that holy fervour will die out unless you feed it. To-day an inspiration of thankfulness fills your soul, and you have the rare power of giving—giving that which you want, and that which costs you sacrifices—the inestimable talent of benevolence is in your possession : but gradually tighten the purse strings, let them once get tangled by non-use and get into a knot, and your hand will be too withered to untie them. “ Take, therefore,” the sentence will go forth, “ take, therefore, the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath ten talents : for unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance, but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.”

Observe, the talent is not lost. “ Give it unto him that hath ten talents.” Nothing in God’s universe is lost. The humble power which perhaps you have regarded lightly is worthy of being reckoned among the ten talents. You have despised it, but the man of splendid gifts and large endowments will receive it. However humble your talent God will not throw it “ as rubbish to the void ; ” it shall be given to him that hath ten talents, and he shall have abundance.

But this is not all. How terrible is the sentence and the doom! Divine denunciation — “Thou wicked and slothful servant.” Divine degradation and deprivation—“Take therefore the talent from him.” Divine abandonment and disinheritance—“Cast ye the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” What can be more “outer darkness” than that darkness of God’s displeasure? and how can there be more “weeping and gnashing of teeth” than in the despairing thought that opportunities are past, and possibilities of retrieving are gone for ever?

“Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness.” The faithful servants are rejoicing in the joy provided for them by their lord, but thither the slothful, neglectful, faithless servant must not go. He must not go there lest he corrupt his fellow-servants, and spread the evil of faithlessness among the faithful. The lord of those servants has returned, and the banquet he has made for them is going on. Lamps flash; glasses clatter; music swells through the spacious hall; the light streams through the windows and the open door; and there is the unprofitable servant thrust back in violence from the doorway—driven away as a worthless fellow into the

night—chased like a dog out into the outer darkness, where not a sound of music reaches him, nor a ray of light falls upon his way ; and there he is left, the victim of the darkness and the storm, to mingle his weeping with the moaning of the wind, and to chatter his teeth in nakedness and cold !

Will God drive any away from the door ? Shall He refuse entrance to any that come ? His city gleams like a dazzling gem ; the light flushes the sky above, and streams through the closed gates of pearl ; the clash of music, the burst and swell of song, the sound of festival, rise upon the air—the marriage supper of the Lamb goes on : but far away, down under cover of the darkness, trudging along with drooping heads and bent forms, is a miserable company ! They turn not back one glance to that city into which entrance has been denied them ; on and on, a weary, footsore, woeful band, behold the unprofitable servants driven away into the outer darkness—there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth !

This man buried but one talent. How much greater sin is it to bury five ! Hoarded wealth, intellectual endowments, great gifts of thought and speech—what a crime to leave these unused ! Men

of two talents, how shall ye appear before God ? Men of five talents, where shall ye stand when the account of the stewardship is demanded ?

If it be so great a sin not to use a talent, how great a sin it must be to use it badly ! If not using a talent at all causes a man to be thrust out into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, what punishment shall they merit who employ their talent to bad ends ? who degrade men ; who foster villainy and crime ; who disseminate falsehood ; who support vice ; who encourage sinfulness ?

Brethren ! ours is a great trust ! We have a great Helper and a great Saviour. Let us seek His help, that we may labour aright.

WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

“We preach Christ crucified.”—I COR. I. 23.

THE apostle found society divided into two distinct classes, both of them equally hostile to the Gospel. On the one hand, the Jew true to his old unbelief would receive no gospel but that which was accompanied by outward signs; on the other hand, the Greek would receive none which was not of the nature of a philosophy, providing him with food for speculation and debate. The Gospel of Christ was for neither of these. It did not minister to the self-importance of the Jew by opening the heavens for his convincing; nor did it gratify the intellectual pride of the Greek by appealing to his reason and submitting itself humbly to the test of his logic. The Gospel of Christ was the announcement of fact; of a fact which at that time was most strange and unpalatable. And that fact was this: that He who had suffered a malefactor's death at Jerusalem was none other than the Jewish Messiah, the Saviour whom at that time the whole world was in a vague way expecting; that He had died for our sins

and had risen again from the dead for our justification: and His acceptance or rejection was set forth as the standard by which from henceforth men would be tried before God. Both classes received it with derision. The Jew—looking for a Messiah who should have the pomp of temporal sovereignty, and “abide for ever” increasing in temporal splendour—repudiated the crucified with scorn; and the Greek—disdaining everything not sustained by philosophic proof and set forth with logical and rhetorical art—ridiculed the idea as absurd. To the one a crucified Christ was a stumbling-block, and to the other the idea was simply foolishness.

But rejection shook not the apostle’s testimony—to him the Cross was itself a sign deeper than the Jew could receive, and a wisdom grander than the Greek could comprehend. In answer to all the demands of his age he could compromise nothing. He planted it before men in all its offensive peculiarities, declaring it at the same time to be the power of God, and the wisdom of God. There was no mistaking him! He refused to hang the Cross with garlands, or to envelope it in a golden haze of fine speech and learning. There it stood in Golgotha, wretched and repulsive to the unbelieving eye; but sublime and glorious to the eye of faith as

the manifested mystery of the ages, the sacrifice of eternal love, God's redemption of a dying world. And Paul refused to veil it. It stood ever in the foreground of his teaching:—in it he found all his examples, with it he clenched all his arguments, and from it he drew all his appeals. The Jew might have heard him had he spoken of Christ's miracles, and the contemplative Greek might have listened had he discoursed on his maxims and precepts; but the world's salvation is not in these. Christ in the manger, Christ on the mount, Christ in the desert, Christ transfigured—Christ anywhere rather than on the cross would have met better the world's taste; yet Paul tells us that the sum and substance of his preaching was not these: not a Christ triumphant, but a Christ humbled; not the life of Christ, but the death of Christ—"We preach Christ crucified."

And why Christ's death, and not His teaching or His life? Because, I answer, the whole life of Christ grew, so to speak, towards his death. Whilst in other men, and in ourselves, death is the point of extremest weakness—the hour when purposes are broken off, and life's work, whether finished or unfinished, is hurried to a conclusion—with Him death was the hour for which He had come, the significant act towards which His life culminated; and instead

of being in Him a confession of weakness was the mightiest factor of His power. So our Lord Himself expounded it; and to call the doctrine of the Cross, as some do, Paul's doctrine, thinking to disparage its authority, is to forget the Lord's own teaching. It was Christ's doctrine before it was Paul's; for no sooner had His disciples learnt who He was, and acknowledged the divinity of His person, than from that time forth He brought the Cross into view. Apart from His distinct utterances concerning the laying down of His life for His sheep, the giving of His life a ransom for many, His blood being shed for the remission of sins—it is impossible not to observe with what intense earnestness and purpose He looks forward to His death. Four distinct prophecies of it from His lips are on record, and probably they are only examples out of many. His death is to Him a necessity laid upon Him; He never hails it but regards it as His work; He moves towards it with steadfastness and certainty as towards the great act of His life; and not only so, He institutes a feast of remembrance by which it should ever be kept in mind. The Lord's Supper is in this respect the most strange and unique ordinance in history. You have nothing else like it. It memorialises a death. There were other events in the

history of Christ far more important and instructive if His death was only an ordinary death;—there were His incarnation, His triumph over temptation, His transfiguration on the mount; but you have no ordinance to celebrate any of these. The special fact to which He would give importance, which He would single out from all others for remembrance through the ages, was that He died. And if, as some men say, His living and not His dying was the great object of His mission, His institution of this feast is unintelligible; but if, as the Scripture tells us, “We are reconciled to God through the *death* of his Son;” if it was “through *death*” that he was to “destroy him that had the power of death, even the devil;” if it is “the *blood* of Jesus Christ” which “cleanseth us from all sin”—then His dying, and not His living, was the chief object of His mission, and we can understand the establishment of the feast. And Paul therefore stands upon the true foundation when he determines to make the Cross his chief and constant theme; when he says, “We preach *Christ crucified*; a stumbling-block to the Jew, and foolishness to the Greek, but to them that are called, the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

Had the apostles conferred with flesh and blood in going forth to preach the new Gospel, their resolution

had been otherwise. Every association of gentleness and refinement was against the cross ; the hangman's rope is not more repulsive to us than was the cross to society then ; it was a shameful, awful death, a death reserved only for the vile and the abominable, and if the apostles had consulted either their own position or success they would have thrust the Cross into the background, and referred to their Master's death as little as possible.

And if, too, they could have taken modern counsel they would have done it ; for the growing number of those who regard Christianity as only one system of many, and deny it its unique position as a supernatural revelation of a supernatural redemption, bid us also cease concerning the Cross. They are impatient of the very term ! "Preach to us," say they, "in these tricky times a sound earnest morality. Let the pulpit deal with present day vices, and talk to men in plain language about drunkenness and bad tempers, about commercial cheating and lying, about slandering and flattery, and the thousand wrongs and nameless evils of the day." And I like the advice ; I go with it most thoroughly. But when I find it means, "Do not preach so much about the Cross ; let us hear less about cleansing by Christ's blood ; let the death of Christ alone," I dissent from

it. I dissent from it because it forbids me to use the chief weapon in the armoury victorious against sin; it is bidding me stop the streams but leave the fountain-head alone; it asks me to lop off the branches but lay no axe upon the root. If I have read this Gospel aright, the true panacea for drunkenness, and bad tempers, and commercial immorality, and all the vices of our fallen manhood, is not the inculcation of virtue, but the bringing of the soul into vital relationship to Christ.

I go back and see what the apostle preached, for his preaching was most successful. I suppose the world was as bad then as it is now. Corinth, to which Paul writes, and of which he speaks, was as black a spot as any upon the earth to-day. There lust was deified; there all the flashy men of the Roman world congregated; there every social and domestic evil was an open sore. And Paul's age generally was as bad as ours; the evils of slavery, and debauchery, and war, were rampant, and what did he preach against them? Did he meet lying by discoursing on the virtues of truthfulness, or lust by pictures of domestic chastity and love, or the evils of trade by glowing philippics on the stability of a sound commerce and the expediency of honesty? You will not say that the apostle did not preach to his times.

He so preached to his times that they said of him he had turned the world upside down, and the government thought fit to shut him up in prison. And what did he preach? "We preach," says he, "Christ crucified." "I determined to know nothing among you," says he, "save Jesus Christ and him crucified." And, brethren, he who preaches that, I care not by what evils he is surrounded, or in what age he lives, preaches to his times. For whence come these evils? They come from the heart, and that heart is the same in every age. Men change, humanity is ever the same. Its falseness and baseness may show themselves in new vices and follies, but at bottom it is the same; and until the heart is subjugated and renewed all else is but temporary good.

Do not mistake; temporary good is better than no good at all. It is well, for example, to follow in the path of war and minister to the wounded and the dying—and thank God England does it so lovingly;—but how much better, if instead of staunching war's evils, England, by her example and counsel, could make war impossible. And so concerning the thousand evils of our time. All hail to the teetotalers who are grappling with the curse of drunkenness! All hail to those men of hope who seek the fallen

and lift her up from the mire, and help her back to self-respect and honour ! All hail to our national educators who give the nation knowledge and instruction ! They are all servants of the King, and all wear the livery of heaven : but none of these things will save the world. The evil is stopped in one place only to break out in another. That which saves men—saves them not from one special vice or another, but saves them from *sin*—is not a human but a divine remedy ; it is “ Christ crucified, to them that perish foolishness, but unto them that are saved the power of God.” And in preaching Christ crucified, Paul held forth the saving help of the world.

And how the apostle preached Christ crucified we ourselves can judge. To picture the cross merely is not to preach it. To preach it is to declare its meaning, and purpose, and design. And in the summary of his gospel, given us towards the close of this epistle, Paul tells us what the substance of his preaching “ Christ crucified ” had been. “ Moreover, brethren,” says he, “ I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you . . . for I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that *Christ died for our sins* according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he *rose again the third day*.” That “ Christ died for our sins ”—that was

his first good news: that "Christ rose again the third day," proving thereby that His death had accomplished its purpose—that was his second good news.

Some men tell us that the majority of Christians these eighteen centuries have been mistaken. Sacrifice and expiation they have discovered are inadmissible to the divine procedure; and therefore Christ's dying for our sins was not to atone for them but to attest the doctrine by which the forgiveness of our sins is attained—*i.e.* (for it can mean no more) like any other martyred prophet He sealed His witness with His blood, and proved thereby—not the truth of His teaching, for that is by no means proved by the teacher's death for it—but His own sincerity and faithfulness. And furthermore, say they, He has left us in His death an example of meekness, and fortitude, and submission, that we should follow in His steps.

Such teaching, I submit, misses the mark. It leaves the deepest meaning of the Cross unexplained. That Christ attested by His death His own sincerity, and left us also a hallowed example, we thankfully affirm; but if this be all, then countless passages of Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments are without meaning and sense, purposely worded to

mislead us. How does this explanation agree with the language of the prophet, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed?" How does it agree with the words of our Lord Himself, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." "The bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." "This is my blood shed for many for the remission of sins?" How does it harmonise with the testimony of the epistles?—the passages are too numerous to be quoted, but listen to a few of them. Christ, "God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." "He gave himself for our sins." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust."

Such is Scripture testimony, and so the apostle preached Christ crucified. And what is it, brethren, in the Cross of Christ that we wounded, guilty sinners need? Is it a martyrdom that we can eulogise? Is it an example which, alas, is too grand for our imita-

tion? Does that still the agony of conscience, or flash the joy of forgiveness through our bitter tears? Alas! if that be all, we have no hope!

But, says the apostle, "*Christ died for our sins.*" Ah, that is the element of power in the Cross. It is this which sanctifies men's lives; it is this which breaks men's hearts for sin; it is this which melts into penitence and tears the high-handed and rebellious, which overturns pride and self-will, and makes men gentle and humble and forgiving; and with these facts before me, let men talk as they may against the Cross as a sacrifice, I cannot but receive it. This is the secret of its power—"Christ died for our sins." My own heart is a witness to it. Call it a noble example? When did a noble example ever pierce the conscience and turn a sinner from his sins? Call it a bright instance of fidelity and love? When did any of the illustrious deeds of which many, thank God, brighten history's page, ever make a proud man humble, an angry man forgiving, or a deceitful man true? Take the name of the most illustrious of Eve's sons and try its effect. Go down with it into the haunts of degradation; carry it with its lustrous associations to the avaricious, and proud, and carnal; spread your sails and bear it to other lands, sounding it not only through the grand forests and valleys

of barbarism, but through the scarcely less grand temples and mosques of hoary superstition; take your name and its glorious deed and try its effect. Will it purify the heart, will it quicken the conscience, will it enlighten the understanding? Will it give, in place of licentiousness and cruelty, noble-mindedness and brotherly love? Will the suffering cling to it, will the wretched cherish it, will the sorrowing hallow it with their tears? Will it become the starting-point of a new life to men of intelligence and integrity? Will it breathe peace to the dying, and be the stay and comfort of the soul when the earthly mists thicken and pain's victorious inroads warn the spirit that the hour has come? But the preaching of Christ crucified does this. The witnesses to its power are found not simply in the past but in the present, not only afar off but nigh at hand. Why need we go further? There are men in this house to-night who, if they told you their heart's deepest experiences, would tell you that nothing moves them so deeply, or fills them so mightily with peace, as Christ crucified for their sins. They would tell you that that uplifted sacrifice shames their meanness, fills their eyes with tears when they remember their sins, stays them as nothing else can stay them when they are tempted to wrong; that it makes their

own cross light, and hallows all their earthly losses and griefs; and that with the thought of it in their hearts they are strong to go down where the shadows lie thickest and all human consolation fails, for they feel that it is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and that it has quickened in their souls a new life, an immortal life—that they can never die.

And there it stands—itsself the foulest deed of cruelty—shedding the soft light of benevolence and love upon the world. There it is—itsself the acme of man's injustice—giving new laws to nations, having become the starting-point of a loftier civilization, having planted in the world a kingdom of righteousness which, like the stone cut out of the mountain, goes on to fill the whole earth. Man's heart everywhere responds to it. The brave missionaries of science have gone forth and have returned: they pressed their keels bravely against the northern ice, and all that British valour and British blood could do was done; they left graves in that polar realm: but the banner of conquest does not float over that icy world, and the flag of science was brought back to us furled. But the missionaries of the Cross have never found the land where they could not triumph; there is no arctic zone to this gospel; however black the night, however frozen the heart, "Christ crucified" has pre-

veiled. "Impracticable" has never been upon Christ's servant's lips when he has come back to us from the lands of death and darkness—for Christ crucified is the power of God and the wisdom of God. "He died for our sins," he died for thee! That is the secret of its power. Rationalise it, and call it but an example, a martyrdom, a triumph of faithfulness, and it becomes but as other deeds: it may be the sun in your sky, but it is a sun shorn of its beams—like the sun of these December days, a mere fireball in the heavens, powerless either to thaw the frozen life of the world or bring back summer to its dying lands.

But the Cross as a sacrifice is the triumph of divine wisdom and love. Before ever it was let down from heaven it was, though unseen, the world's conscious or unconscious hope. Like a sun veiled behind rending clouds, it poured down its beams in a thousand broken lights and scattered rays on the world's woe and sin. We see them falling upon the altar in Judea, and halving all her temple and her service; we see them brightening constantly through the world's dark history in type and symbol—gleaming upon Noah's ark and Abraham's altar, radiating upon the serpent uplifted for a nation's healing, and the rock smitten for a nation's thirst; we see its rays glancing, too, from the very clouds of man's ignor-

ance and prejudice, lighting up with expectancy the philosophy of the schools and the religion of the people ; even in the dark places of the earth its rays, stained and distorted, fall on the pagan's immolation and the barbarian's senseless sacrifice ; there it was, waiting to be revealed in the fulness of time. At first the world laughed it to scorn—but it is the wisdom of God and the power of God ! It is the key to all the riddles of a history confused by falsehood and sin ; it sheds its light upon the darkness that rests on the ways of God, and fulfils his noblest purposes in bringing men back to the path of life : and, mightier than all man's fruitless efforts, it secures to him—what all his endeavours failed to accomplish, and his most bitter sacrifices failed to obtain—the forgiveness of sin, the peace of the heart, the forfeited life eternal.

It was this which Paul preached, giving peace, and hope, and eternal life to all who would receive it. And take this, my fellow-sinner, to your heart to-night : however bad you are, however foul and dark are your deeds, however you are estranged from God by sin and wicked works, take this to your own soul as the good news of the Gospel—" Christ died for our sins." Without money and without price take, at this moment, the full benefit of the Cross to your-

self. Say to your accusing conscience, "Christ died for our sins;" say to your doubts and fears, "Christ died for our sins;" say to Satan and all his accusations, "Christ died for our sins;" look up to heaven and say to the very justice of God, "Christ died for our sins." Live in the joy of it; let it dwell in your bosom till it fills your whole soul with peace; hold on to it till it breaks your heart for past sins, and sin becomes hateful to you with an intolerable hatred; hold on to it, and you will know Christ as the power of God and the wisdom of God, and His Cross will be to you not only a fountain of cleansing but the fountain of a new and higher life—you shall have eternal life, which is "the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

DIVINE REWARDS.

“Lo we have left all and followed thee. What shall we have therefore?”—MATT. XIX. 27.

THE question was occasioned by our Lord's answer to the rich young ruler who came inquiring of him what he should do to inherit eternal life. “Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come follow me.” And when the circumstance had passed and the young man had gone away, “Then answered Peter and said unto him, “Lord, *we*”—Peter really means “*I*,” and only attempts to hide his self-complacency by using “*we*”—“Lord we have left all and followed thee ; what shall we have therefore ?”

This was one of Peter's low moods. He is for the moment beneath himself. He has been living, in his companionship with Christ, in a high atmosphere ; and the thoughts and motives that guide common men have been laid aside. He has acted from rarer impulses and nobler feelings than live in hearts where Christ holds no sway, and the sordid

maxim of "minding Number One," by which like all the world he lived when but a fisherman in Galilee, had scarcely entered his mind. For Christ lifted men up and ennobled them. In His presence the mean man became generous, and the extortionate man just. Christ shone round society like a sun, and wherever there was any capability of reflection He shone something of His own lustre into it. Ordinary and commonplace natures became bright with something of His grace, and beautiful with something of His loveliness. And no man felt this more than Peter. When Christ first met him he seemed transformed in a moment, and "immediately he left all and followed him." His net, his ship, his trade, his home—all went. He had no thought for such things. Christ filled his whole soul; and the man who just before had probably been driving close bargains, and making the most of his business, and thinking of what he could lay up for the future—left all to follow the houseless Christ and share his poverty and fate. That was grand; even heroic!

But Peter seems now in one of those low moods which I suppose the best of men as well as the worst are subject to. No man is always at his best; no man is always true to his highest self. Life with

most of us is like a fountain ; sometimes its glittering cascades are thrown up brightly into the sunlight, and the very mists of life are rainbowed, but anon it falls to just a dull low stream without brightness or sparkle, and at such times we become the prey of all sorts of mean thoughts, and are victimised by aims of which in our better moments we are heartily ashamed. So Peter seems just now:—he has left all and followed the Lord, but he has dropped just now into the old world-spirit again. He is become calculating and mercenary. The word “compensation” has been subtly whispered in his ear ; and while at other times he would have scorned it, now he entertains it. “Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven,” was Christ’s answer to the ruler. What prospective treasure, then, had *he* ? He would like to see the other side of his account. *He* had left all and followed Christ ; and when he did it, to his honour be it said, he did it from noble self-forgetful love ; but now he would make something out of it. “Lord, what shall we have therefore ?” It was essentially the old self-seeking spirit of the world—gain, recompense, reward were for the moment uppermost in his thought—and Peter gives us in one sentence the measure of what he had been, and the measure of what he for the

moment is. "Lo, we have left all and followed thee;" that is the high-souled glorious sacrifice! "What shall we have therefore?" that is the low mercenary spirit to which he has at present fallen!

Now, this question misapprehends altogether the motives and aims that ought in following Christ to rule our conduct. The man accustomed to measure everything he does by the amount it will yield will probably consider it sensible enough and practical too; he is always asking concerning any service he performs, or any sacrifice to which he submits, "What shall we have for it?" but that man's soul is very small, if indeed it is not utterly dead. There are bright fountains of which he never drinks; and the inspirations of heaven that visit other men never come to him, because he has done them violence so often. For the best acts of life are never done by contract; we never bargain about the costliest services of the heart. Love refuses to be put into the scales and weighed off against so much advantage. The question, What shall we have for this service or that, does very well for life's lower spheres,—for the market, and the shop, and the exchange,—but in the sanctuaries of life, in the places of the soul's hope, and faith, and love, it is never asked. Does the mother ask it as she watches by

her sick child, soothing its restlessness and pain at the expense of her own health and life?—is it for what she can get that she watches there? No! her love would scorn the thought of payment, and she would remind you that she is not a hireling, but a mother. Does the father ask it as he goes forth day by day from his home to toil for the dear ones he leaves behind?—is the thought of recompense and compensation the motive power of that willing constant service? When the bold swimmer plunges into the strong current and at risk of his own life saves the drowning man, is it reward that fires his soul? Have any of the glorious deeds that stand conspicuous on history's page been done for gain? Nay, instantly it can be said of a man, He did it for what he could get—the world takes her crown from his brow, and leaves his tarnished deed to perish in oblivion. All the best and noblest of life's services are done without thought of reward—their sufficient reward is in being allowed to do them. We sell our poorest services, but our richest, purest deeds are done for nothing; we traffic with life's common actions, but when we do a grand or heroic thing payment insults us;—self-interest did not move us, and self-advantage is not our reward. “Do good and lend,” said Christ, “hoping for nothing again,

and ye shall be the children of the Highest." And this is the true spirit of the Christian life, as it is of all life that is not at last to perish and be swept away. The Christian leaves all to follow Christ by the inspiration of a mighty love to Christ; a love which asks only that it may follow, and seeks only for its reward the privilege to follow on. He is unmoved by threatening or reward; and as a child of the Highest, gives, and suffers, and serves, "hoping for nothing again." This is the spirit of the Christian life; and Peter's question, "What shall we have?" utterly misconceives it.

Yet among the many motives which lead men to religion, it is to be feared that this is by no means an uncommon one. It is difficult for any of us to keep our motives entirely pure, and uniformly act from the highest considerations; but while that is to be deplored, it is far more deplorable that many come to the religion of Christ with no high motive at all; come, drawn to it simply by considerations of self-interest and advantage. To say nothing now of such persons as make a show of following Christ in order to better their worldly position—to gain respect and esteem, to enter into society and make friends, to obtain some responsible appointment or

place—to say nothing now of these, many who hardly own it to themselves have come to the religion of Christ not from self-forgetful love yielding themselves to his glory, but simply because of the advantages they hope to secure. They want, above all things, to be happy—happiness is first with them, and nobleness only secondary—and they have heard that the Christian is happy, and so they come to share, if they can, his peace, and comfort, and joy. They feel how intricate are life's ways, and having a strong desire to get on, they want the approval and guidance of their Creator to that end. There is a hell, they have heard, in God's universe, and descriptions of its torments have harrowed their very souls: in what is falsely called the preaching of the "good news," they have been told of awful flames and belching fires, and, driven by sheer terror, they have fallen down at the feet of Christ, in the hope that He will deliver them. Heaven, too, has been painted to them as a place of luxurious ease and indolent enjoyment, and therefore they want to enter it. But this religion of calculation is false. This is not the religion of Christ at all. This is but self-serving wearing a religious mask. Self is as much at the bottom of it as at the bottom of the most selfish action man ever performed. It is simply

selfishness carried into religious directions, selfishness embellished with psalms and hymns and prayers: it is not Christ that this form of religiousness wants, but what Christ has to bestow. These men want not to be made free from sin, but to be made happy and comfortable; they are not seeking self-abnegation and self-crucifixion through Christ's cross, but a short road to glory; holiness is not their aim, but all their thought is how to escape from a hell of torment and enter a heaven of ease.

Brethren, the true Christian life stands clear of these things. If there were no heaven to gain and no hell to shun the Christian heart would follow on. Right-doing and right-living God has ordained shall always bring their reward, but it is not with the *reward* of righteousness but with *righteousness itself* that the godly soul is in love; and without regard to considerations of advantage or disadvantage, it does righteously. With the Saviour's cross in view it can do no other; and whether to follow Christ leads to peace or persecution, to prosperity or to death, it must *follow*. It asks not what shall be its reward; the question is never breathed from its lips, never so much as admitted to the heart, "What shall we have therefore?" Enough for it that it can

leave all and follow. Virtue and love are satisfied from themselves, and the

“Glory of Virtue [is] to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong ;
Nay, but she aims not at glory ; no lover of glory is she ;
Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

* * * * *

She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky.
Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.”

And to love Christ for Himself, and not for what He has to give—to seek righteousness for its own sake, and not for its rewards—to do right because it is right, without regard either to blame or praise—that is the Christianity of all noble souls. *That* was Christ’s own spirit ; it was His meat and drink to do the will of His Father, though to do that will brought him into conflict with all the wrongs and passions of the world, and at last slew him upon the cross. And behind Christ I see a vast company following, a great procession reaching through the ages ; *He* with the great Cross on before, and they with their own crosses following. Apostles and martyrs walk there ; grand men who have wrestled all their lives with the great world’s wrongs are there ; men and women who in humble spheres, where no eye saw them but God’s, exhibited the forgotten heroisms of faith and love are there ; and

as they draw near to the city of God one sound breaks from their lips, (it is not, What shall we have therefore?) we hear it already, like the sound of many waters, from the innumerable company that stand around the throne: "Unto him that hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, *to Him* be glory and dominion for ever and ever." The crowns of the redeemed are always laid at the Saviour's feet.

But whilst reward is not to be, and never is, the true Christian motive for following Christ, or for doing righteously, Christ has much reward to give. Righteousness and reward are always bound together. "The commandments of the Lord are exceeding broad, and in keeping of them"—*in* keeping of them, not *for* keeping of them "there is great reward."

Listen how Christ answers Peter's question. Christ might have rebuked him. It was very little that Peter left for Christ in comparison with what Christ left for Peter; but how does He answer him? "Ye shall sit on thrones; ye shall have a hundredfold; ye shall inherit everlasting life." There is a Christ-like reply! Is not that like Christ? Oh, the magnanimity of His bounty! It outreaches our thought; He rewards exceeding abundantly above all that we

asked or thought. Our poor little sacrifices for His sake touch Him so that He would thrust all heaven into our arms. The little services we render are so treasured and valued, and seen through His eyes of love are so magnified, that when He shall assemble the angels and the worlds together He will bring them forth, and even to deeds that the saints have forgotten will direct the attention of the universe; telling how He was naked and one clothed Him, and hungry and one gave Him meat, thirsty and He received a cup of cold water; and with the hosts of God as spectators He will bestow His rewards. It is the law of all generous natures to recognise services, and the nobler the heart the nobler always is the appreciation of kindness done. No man can ever serve Christ and Christ forget it. You cannot leave your fireside for an hour to do Him service but that He will remember it,—remember it when you have forgotten it—and nothing, I think, will surprise us more than to hear how Christ will speak of our deeds. *He* will read them in the light of His own generous heart, and not even a cup of cold water given in His name shall lose its reward. Heaven is only heaven to Christ because He can share it with others. It is more blessed to Him to give than to receive, and the rewards of Christ are all worthy of Himself.

But whilst Christ's rewards are great, to deter any from entering His service simply for reward, He sets forth in the parable which follows the principle upon which reward is given in the spiritual kingdom. Lest any should follow Him in a mercenary spirit and serve Him for wages and not for love, He gives us the law of reward in a parable. He represents the kingdom of heaven as a man who is a householder, hiring his servants. With the first labourers he takes into his service a bargain is struck—they agree with him for a penny a day. How ironically he deals with this wage-earning spirit—a spirit well enough for the world, but false and profitless in the kingdom of heaven—we shall afterwards see. Afterwards he calls other servants, for shorter and yet shorter periods of time. They strike no bargain, make no contract; they are not anxious about pay, but will leave it to the master, *he* declaring that it shall be what is just and right. But when the time of payment comes, he gives the same to all—to every man a penny; to those who worked from early morning the penny they had agreed upon, and to those who had served but a few hours, or had scarcely served at all, the like sum;—teaching us this, that Christ's rewards are not *wages* but *gifts*; that in the service of the kingdom of heaven there are no contracts, no

bargains, no stipulations ; but that all its arrangements are carried out in kingly love and glorious grace. Moreover, this is taught us, that it is the spirit in which we work and not the quantity we accomplish that is of any account ; and for this reason “ many that are first shall be last, and the last first.” In Christ’s view the work of a lifetime in the wage-earning spirit is outbalanced by the work of an hour in the spirit of love. Men give their rewards according to what is done ; no matter what we intended to do, we are rewarded only according to that which is done ;—the world sets no value upon intentions, it takes no account of unfruitful endeavours—what the world rewards is *success* ; but, said Christ, “ Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” Not what you did, but what you had it in your heart to do, and the spirit in which you did it, is what Christ will reward. Christ judges by the heart not by the offering or the service. You may contribute a sovereign in mistake for a copper—Christ will value it only as copper ; but you may contribute a copper when it is in your heart to give a sovereign but you cannot—and your copper will be golden in Christ’s remembrance, and golden too in the register of rewards. “ The Lord looketh at the heart.” A man may make a great show in serving Him, and yet please Him but little : he may build churches,

endow charities, figure on subscription lists, fill numerous offices, and yet have but little reward ; for he may do nothing of all his doings out of love : the eleventh-hour Christian who brings but a single deed, a deed of pure devotion, shall be greater than he. "Well done, good and faithful servant," will be the Lord's words; not good and *successful*—good and *faithful*, whether successful or not;—"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

But we are taught something further by this reply. The first part of Christ's promise to Peter is generally supposed to be receiving its fulfilment. "Ye shall sit on thrones"—and those twelve have become the moral monarchs of the world ; they are the princes of that spiritual kingdom which is filling the whole earth ; they sit on thrones side by side with Christ in the thought and affection of all Christian souls. But in this reply our Lord promises Peter a hundred-fold more of the very things he had sacrificed for His sake. "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." Now, if such language has any application, it must be

such that it can be fulfilled even to men who linger in the dungeon or perish at the stake. These are the men who chiefly have made such sacrifices, and it is not for us to say, that to them it has not been fulfilled;—it is not for us to say that they have not found a fatherhood and motherhood, a sisterhood and brotherhood, a hundredfold more real and precious than the natural ones they left behind; and as to possessions and lands, they knew that “all things were theirs; things present and things to come, life and death—all things were theirs, for they were Christ’s and Christ is God’s.”

But this is the idea underlying the words—Christ’s rewards are like in kind to the spirit of the sacrifice or service rendered. God does not reward work with ease, but with the power to do more work. To mercifulness He gives the grace of mercifulness more abundantly; to purity He reveals a deeper, holier purity still to be attained. God’s rewards do not cripple us, shelve us, pension us off, but make us more noble and strong and zealous. The heaven of God is not a sort of asylum where those who have lived their life and finished their work are taken in and cared for to all eternity; but is a grander sphere of service, a field of higher, nobler activity: and those who were common servants here are champions there; and the man who

had but ten talents here, there becomes the ruler over ten cities. Oh! if it is mere ease, mere indolent enjoyment you want, Christ will not give it you;—such a reward, instead of ennobling you, would degrade you, and Christ's rewards always seek our good and not our hurt.

Will you follow Christ ?

Christ does not mislead you :—He speaks of self-denial, cross-bearing, tribulation. If you put yourself in Christ's hands it must be for training and discipline—to be meetened and perfected. You shall have reward, but tribulations too. He is not the skilful artist who leaves the block of marble untouched; but he who by many blows of the hammer, by many sharp strokes of the chisel, brings out and perfects his conception of beauty. So Christ, if need be by the discipline of sorrow, will seek to conform you to his own glorious image.

“ If I find him, if I follow,
What his guerdon here ?
Many a sorrow, many a conflict,
Many a tear.”

Yet amidst it all *peace* and *joy*.

I call you not to a luxurious indolence, but to a glorious training. Away with the question, What shall I have? and bear the cross.

Oh ! I call you to follow Christ ! Christ was poor, he is still poor ; Christ was reproached, he is still reproached ; Christ went to a cross, there is a cross for all who come after Him. But I call you to follow Him. Not to ease, but to conflict ; not to rest, but to labour ; not to wearing a crown, but to carrying a cross. Is it not a grand thing to follow Christ ? Is not a pure, honourable, holy life a sublime thing in the midst of a world so debased and polluted as this ? Does not the very difficulty of the achievement inspire you ? Young men, will you not stand out for Christ ? Christ calls you to follow Him. Men heard his call of old, and left all and followed him. Matthew left his publican's seat, and Peter and Andrew left their fishing.

Will *you* not follow ? Will you not leave all your paltry, miserable self-seeking, and from this night say unto Christ, " I follow thee " ? Will you not abandon all your schemes and plans of pleasing self, and fall in with those who follow Christ on to eternal progress and everlasting service and joy ?

Ah ! do not say No ! Do not fall below the level of your convictions—do not strangle the divine impulses awakened in your heart—do not, like the young ruler, go away from Christ *sad*. May the love of Christ constrain you all to follow Him. Amen.

PERSONAL CONSECRATION.

“I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”—ROMANS XII. 1.

IF you examine the Epistle to the Romans, you will find that it consists of two parts—one doctrinal and the other practical. Until this twelfth chapter the apostle has treated of redemption in its doctrinal and theoretical aspects, but he now begins to point out its practical bearings upon life and duty. At the head of this practical portion of the epistle—treating of the Christian’s duty in relation to business, to hospitality, to government, and such things—he places this supreme duty of personal consecration unto God. And he does this designedly, for until we have surrendered self unto God, all other things are comparatively of no account. That a man be diligent in business, that he be kindly affectioned, that he provide things honest in the sight of all men, that he seek to overcome evil with good, are qualities which, however commendable they are in themselves, are worthless whilst God’s supreme claim is disregarded. This personal consecration is the basis of all other

obligations. At the threshold of Christian life stands this altar, and no one can live acceptably until he has offered himself upon it. This is the first Christian duty, and it gives meaning and worth to all other moral acts of the life; apart from this the life may be morally good, but it is not Christian: a heathen may be diligent in business, full of brotherly kindness, honest and honourable in all his relations, endeavouring to overcome evil with good, but his life does not spring from the hidden principle of self-consecration in the heart. Between one man and another outwardly there may be very little difference; they may both be honest, benevolent, and active in promoting the welfare of others, but the difference between them before God may be immense; for whilst the one does all from reasons of utility, or from a desire to take an honourable place in society, or perhaps from higher motives of duty and benevolence, the other does all because he is consecrated unto God, and is not his own, but is bought with a price. And, therefore, because this act of self-sacrifice, of personal consecration, is the spring and ground of Christian duty and service, and determines the whole character of the life and conduct, Paul has placed it here at the head of this practical part of his epistle. And virtually he says this to us:

First offer yourself a living sacrifice unto God ; and then your honesty, your hospitality, your obedience to the state, your work in the Church and the world, your temperance and abstemiousness for the sake of your weak brother, will be valuable ; they will flow spontaneously from a right principle, they will be the fruit of your inner life, and will be to the glory of God. But until, brethren, the first verse in this manual of daily duty is obeyed, it will be of little moment that all else are diligently performed, for God requires not simply yours but *you*.

Let us examine, then, the nature of the sacrifice claimed. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, *by the mercies of God*, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." This, then, is the first point to be kept in mind—this sacrifice is not a *sin-offering* but a *thank-offering*. Whenever we hear of sacrifices our minds very naturally revert to the altars of Judaism. Those altars not only pointed the world to the atonement of its Saviour, but shadowed forth great and solemn truth concerning the human spirit. Sacrifice is the hidden law of life. From the life of God Himself down to the lowest creature that fulfils its end, all is controlled by the law of sacrifice. But

before men could feel what sacrifice meant they needed a visible and material altar—an altar on which victims might breathe out their life vicariously, and offer their bodies for the sake of others to be consumed in the sacrificial fire. But those altars were only symbols. The real temple, Paul tells us, was not that glorious structure on Mount Moriah, for the true temple of Deity is the human soul ; and neither were these offerings real sacrifices, for the true place of sacrifice is the altar of our own hearts. The slaying of a lamb or the consuming of a bullock was only pictorial—it set forth what God meant ultimately to be enacted in its spiritual counterpart in every soul ; for until the life is placed upon His altar, and all the powers are afire with His zeal, and we are ourselves dedicated to Him, His claim to us is not satisfied. We only find our life when we have died to self and have offered ourselves living sacrifices unto God.

But our offering of ourselves is not as a sin-offering but as a thank-offering. Paul does not beseech us by the greatness and multitude of our offences to expiate our transgressions, but he appeals to us by the mercies of God to perform the reasonable service of gratitude in presenting ourselves holy and acceptable unto Him. Our sin-offering God Himself has

provided. Before the visible altar was abolished, God laid His only begotten Son upon it as our sin-offering, and of Christ it is written, He "has made one sacrifice for sins for ever." And from that moment the visible altar vanished, and the place of sacrifice was transferred from the material temple to the spiritual temple of man's soul; for by the offering of that sacrifice for sin every man was laid under a moral obligation to offer himself as a thank-offering unto God. The only altar of sacrifice now is an altar for thanksgivings, and that is raised in the temple of the soul. When, constrained by the love of Christ, a man surrenders his will unto God; when he brings his life and lays it at God's feet; when he brings as his offering a living, loving heart, then he offers a sacrifice with which God is well pleased. But let no one think that by presenting himself as a living sacrifice he can in any way expiate his sins, or that by the most devout personal consecration he can atone for any one transgression that he has committed; such a sacrifice, consecration from such motives, is an abomination in God's sight; for every sacrifice offered for sin *now*, whether it be in the individual life, or in the Anglican sacrament, or Romish mass, is an insult to the cross of Christ, and an implication of a defect in the redemption

which God Himself has provided. God has offered our sin-offering; that which is due to Him now is that we present to Him the thank-offering of ourselves.

Again. This sacrifice required is not a *dead sacrifice* but a *living one*; “your bodies a *living* sacrifice unto God.” Not such a sacrifice as exterminates the life, but such as glorifies it. God rejoices not in death, but in life; and since the sacrifice of death has been paid, the altar is now only crowned with gifts of love, beautiful and immortal. Once for all God has taken the sacrifice through death. Death is as fearful as sin which caused it, in His sight; and whilst He received that death-sacrifice the heavens stood in mourning, the sun was darkened, the cross was wrapt beneath a pall; and whilst earth and heaven trembled, the Almighty Father took the very consequence of sin as sin’s cancelling. But that was the last death-sacrifice! Blood, blood, blood, had till then been upon His altar; the knives and garments of His priests were stained with blood; the mercy-seat under the very cloud of the Divine presence was sprinkled with the offensive and yet the needful blood:—but the last blood for sin was shed on Calvary. He accepts now only living sacrifices—the sacrifice of willing service, of joyous consecration, of triumphant, thankful pre-

sensation of body, soul, and spirit, by those who feel His love. The death-sacrifice was offered amid signs of woe and mourning, but this living sacrifice of gratitude is presented amid a psalm of praise. Joy, gladness, peace, victory, fill the soul of him who lays himself upon this altar. Life never thrills with such deep and unutterable joy as when we ascend the steps to this consecration, and bind ourselves with love's bright cords as a living sacrifice. Then do we lose our life, and in losing it we find it. True life from that hour begins. When we cease to live to our own glory, and live to the glory of Him who hath bought us, life reveals to us its meaning and its treasures : "Old things pass away, and behold all things become new." Until then life's reality is never felt ; until then our eyes are blinded to its sublimity ; until then to live has meant but little more to us than to travel to the grave. But when we have completed the living sacrifice, our lives become real, earnest, sublime,—sublime, not as earth counts sublime, but sublime through motives only seen by God. And then we can say with the apostle, when speaking of this sacrifice, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"—or, again, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless *I live* ; yet

not I, Christ liveth in me." "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Then once more. This sacrifice is not *partial*, but *personal* and *complete* :— " your bodies," *i.e.* yourselves—the entire self. Now, this is the heart and core of all true consecration. God asks for *you* : His claim is upon your *individual life*. Your wealth to Him, apart from yourself, is nothing :—has He not seamed the hills with silver, and strewn the caves of the sea with pearls? Your service, honourable and valuable as it may be, apart from you is nothing to Him :—" He maketh the winds His messengers, and flaming fires His ministers." The consecration of your children to Him, apart from yourself, does not affect His will towards *you* :—spirits fly from His hand like sparks from a fire, and worlds rise in His track like dust from a chariot, but He can never make *you* again! *You* are created, and no other child can be to Him what you are! Angels and seraphim serve Him, but their service is not that tribute of *your* love which He fondly seeks! It is *you* that God wants—*yours* is nothing, *you* are all important; and until you have said to Him, " My Father, I am

Thine," there will be incompleteness in His family, and a vacant place in His heart.

And you can only offer yourself to God through your entire consecration to Him. It must be done in the solemn sanctuary of your own soul, and there, feeling His great love, you must place yourself upon His altar. Self must be given away to Him to spend and be spent for His glory. Personal aims and ambition must be relinquished, and the whole spirit and soul and body be laid at His feet. Life for self must be recognised as evil and to be forsaken, and the whole conduct and character be filled with the glorious ambition to serve and glorify God. "I am Thine: *I am not my own, but Thine*, to serve Thee wholly and for ever." That is the language of the consecrated soul to God. And from that moment of consecration self dies as an object of service; the new life of God reigns within us, and so fills and animates us that whatsoever we do, whether even we eat or drink, we do it unto the Lord.

And when self is given, the consecration of all else spontaneously and necessarily follows. When a man has laid *himself* upon the altar, his goods, his time, his talents, are all for ever after held for God. Let any one of us go to-day into the innermost sanctuary of our hearts, and dedicate *self* unto the Lord, and

after that act of consecration nothing will be withheld. And until we can do that we shall always find the consecration of other things hard and difficult, and against our natures. Because Paul had performed this to its uttermost the cross was no longer hard and dreadful to him, but was radiant with glory. And the reason why we find the cross hard and unlovely is because we have never offered ourselves upon it, and found the new life to which such a profound sacrifice opens.

Do the requirements of the Gospel seem hard and extravagant to you? do the demands it makes upon everything you possess seem unjustifiable?—The reason is, you are not yourself consecrated unto God. Does it seem difficult to give the very lowest thing a man can give, namely, your money, to Christ? do you feel that you have not sufficient strength to lay your wealth at Christ's feet, or even such a proportion of it as you feel to be fair and right? do the calls seem numerous, and never come but that you secretly wish you could evade them?—It is because you have not first given *yourself* unto the Lord, and therefore all other forms of sacrifice are forced and irksome.

Or if we come to higher forms of consecration—say, of your prospects, your ambition, your cherished

hopes—how much more difficult this is! To give up your idea of what you will be, and take God's idea; to lay your ambition on the altar—your ambition to be a prosperous tradesman, a well-to-do citizen, a man of wealth and honour—and say to God, “I have given up living for myself, what wilt *thou* have me to do? Why, you feel that that is too difficult to be taken into account:—to think of your voluntarily doing less business that you might do more for Christ; to think of your relinquishing your aims of self-aggrandisement and taking for your sole purpose in living to glorify God; to think of your altogether changing your aims, prospects, and ideas in life, and devoting yourselves to be apostles of the Lord, burning and shining lights for Christ in the midst of a dark generation—these things in your present state of mind may seem impossible. But this is the meaning of consecration; and the man who is entirely consecrated unto God will be able to do this.

And this is not all:—there are with some of you even higher forms of sacrifice than these. You have your children, and they after all are your treasures. In their baptism you dedicated them unto God; but did you mean that dedication, or was it only a form? Have you indeed dedicated them, or

are you training them up consonant with your own worldly ambition for them? Are you remembering that they are not your own but God's—sacredly and solemnly covenanted to Him? Oh! Christian parents are often grievously wrong here. How do we see the sons of pious homes led only to think of self and business and position, and nothing of Christ! Let me put in a strong plea for the Christian ministry. The Christian ministry must be supplied by Christian parents, who from the first consecrate their sons wholly to Christ. Do you speak of their hearing a Divine call? The Divine call to a son is oftenest heard through the lips of a pious mother. A mother's vows of consecration and a father's Christian counsel and prayers are the hand of God upon the shoulder of the lad! A Divine call! Every one of us is divinely called to preach the Gospel up to the full measure of our ability; and all that is wanted is the grace and strength to heed it. But how can children hear a call to consecrate themselves to a work which, from a worldly point of view, has few advantages, when the chief thing in life set before them by their parents is worldly success? Oh! if Christian households only produced a godly seed, if all England's Christian families sent forth as they ought to do generation after generation of

consecrated sons and daughters, what an augmentation would be given to the power of the church and the success of the Gospel!

But the stumbling-block is at the threshold! Christians must first lay *themselves* upon the altar—be *themselves* entirely dedicated to God—and then their wealth, their talents, their children, cannot be withheld. Once feel, my brother, that you are not your own, but bought with the price of the precious blood—that you are redeemed by Christ out of the slavery to sin and self, and that you are no longer at liberty to go back to it—and your complete sanctification will not be far off. Realize the fact now that you are the Lord's—that the price of your redemption has been accepted—and then you will see that life to self is a robbery of God, and an ungrateful recompense of your Saviour's love.

That cross there on Calvary is God's claim upon you—there is the price that has been paid for your guilty spirit. God has not redeemed the angels at such a cost: heaven had no richer treasure, and the bosom of the Father held no dearer love than Him who is crucified for you. "I beseech you by the mercies of God,"—not by the consuming fire of hell, not by the eternal bliss of heaven, but by arguments outweighing these by as much as love is stronger.

than fear, and the consciousness of right more blessed than the possession of reward,—“ I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Put your neck this morning beneath Christ’s foot in token of your servitude ; let Him this morning put His mark upon you, even His own blood, to proclaim to all that you are His apostle ; draw near to the cross,—go down on your knees before it,—wait there till His voice bids you rise ; and rise a sworn soldier in His army to be faithful to Him even unto death.

Lastly. This is a “*reasonable*” sacrifice. It is not an extravagant or unwarrantable thing that is required of you. Unreasonable—yea, irrational—is the man who, belonging to Christ, yet strives to serve himself. His life is not only against the dictates of gratitude, but in the face of the very plainest directions of reason. Side by side with the moral madness of the sinner who rejects Christ, must be placed the unreasonableness of the blood-bought man who does not recognise his Saviour’s claim. Think of it ! How irrational it is ! A man whose Father has made the stars, and holds the sun in His right hand, struggling and toiling to lay up treasure

on earth, "where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal!" How irrational it is! A man with an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, anxious to acquire some strip of land, or a few frail tenements upon this perishable globe! How irrational it is! A child of God, with all the glorious promises secured to him, fearful lest his children shall want for bread, or he himself shall ever fail for the where-withal to eat and to be clothed! But what is this irrationality to that of one who trusts to be saved through the blood of Christ, who every day is the recipient of blessings through that blood, who knows that at any moment the golden gate may open to pass him through to eternal life, but who still resists the claims of Christ's love to his person, and counts his own Redeemer unworthy of his service. This shows a man irrational as the very beasts that perish; and, brethren, the apostle is right; the only "reasonable" course open to the Christian man is entire personal consecration unto God.

One remark in conclusion. The absence of this self-sacrifice is the secret of the want of full peace and joy in Christian experience. Several of late have asked me, "Why am I not happy? Many years I

have believed in Christ, but I feel I am wanting something; wanting that peace 'which passeth all understanding,' and that joy unspeakable and full of glory of which others seem possessed." Why is it? Because you have a divided heart. You are trying to serve two masters—God and Mammon, Christ and self, the world to come and that which is. You have never surrendered yourself wholly unto God, and you will never know the full joy of your religion until you do.

Have you not felt how human attachments are deepened and cemented by sacrifices? how that the friend for whom you have denied yourself becomes more dear through your denial; how that the child for which as a parent you have made the most sacrifice becomes more and more precious as the sacrifice becomes more and more intense? And it is so with you and Christ. You have never felt Him precious, because you have never placed yourself upon His altar. All you have done for Him has never filled your soul with one of the pangs of sacrifice, out of which the tenderest, dearest love is born. You have given what you could spare, you have sacrificed unto the Lord that which cost you nothing, and therefore you have received nothing in return.

This morning dedicate yourself wholly unto God;

disentangle yourself from all your earthly aims and ambitions; recognise Christ's claims upon you and meet them wholly, and your Saviour shall become most "precious" to you, and God shall witness in your heart that you are His. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

I WILL GO IN THE STRENGTH OF THE LORD GOD.

NEW YEAR'S SERMON, 1876.

"I will go in the strength of the Lord God."—PSA. LXXI. 16.

MAN must "go." The question is not whether we will "go" or not. There is no alternative. Life is itself a "going." We are ever moving onwards, and the journey of life, whether we wish it or not, is ever being accomplished. One after another of life's milestones is left behind us, and the journey onwards is ever progressing. Successively we fill life's different relationships, and move on from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, and from manhood to old age; and even those who reach the furthest goal live but a short life. The time of man's life here is but a span: if he plant an oak he cannot live to see it in its prime; the mountains laugh at him as he passes over their hoary crests, or quarries their rocky sides; the solemn stars of God light up his little life with light which left them centuries before his race was created; and yet, span as it is, he must go on. And the question before us

is not, Shall we *go* ? but, *How* shall we go ? Shall we go, meeting the solemnities and the eternities in our own strength ? or shall we go girded with the strength of the Mighty God ? Are we sufficient for these things alone, or is our sufficiency of God ?

There are, therefore, right and wrong ways of going. We can go without God if we choose, or we can go with Him. There is no compulsion put upon any man to do right. If a man say, "I have my own wisdom and tact and shrewdness, and these will serve me ; what want I with the Almighty ?" God will leave him alone. God does not go with any man against his will. We need not build up walls of rock, or fashion for ourselves gates of brass to shut the Almighty out of our life ; if we stretch but so much as a spider's web across our path He will not come after us. In this matter the will of the creature is supreme ; and if anywhere in God's dominions there is one who would rather be without God, and live out his life independently of His aid, God will not force either help or wisdom or grace upon him. We can live, as thousands at this moment are living, in our own strength, if we choose. We can enter this year and put confidence in none save ourselves. We can say, "My health will stand"—though at any moment God's wind may blow upon us, and it will

wither. We can say, "My own tact will serve me"—though in three months complications may arise which will prove our ruin. We can look round upon our substance, our families, our plans, and say, "I can go through this year well enough by myself"—though when we say peace and safety, then may come sudden destruction. But no one of us is compelled to live this year with God. These words before us are the announcement of an independent decision, and if we make it ours to-day it is by our own free will and choice. There is no law to compel the lonely sailor to steer by his guiding star: he may renounce all guidance and trust himself only to the waves. There is nothing to hinder the foolish traveller from essaying the mountain summit: he may clamber alone to its precipices and peaks, and leave his bones on the stainless snows; there is no law compelling men to be wise. And if we choose to breast life's billows unpiloted, or face life's mountainous difficulties alone, we can. We can say, "I will go in the strength of my own wisdom and judgment and prudence; I will go alone:" or we may say, "I will go in the strength of the Divine wisdom and power and guidance; I will go with the Lord God." The wrong way and the right way of going are before us, and it is ours to choose.

Now, this resolution to go in the strength of the Lord God is, *firstly*, grounded on a right view of life; *secondly*, it breathes the right spirit of life; and, *thirdly*, it develops the right method of life.

It is grounded on a right view of life. Our life is not a thing of chance. We do not find ourselves in the midst of universal being by accident or chance. The successive generations of men are not so much glittering spray thrown up from an ocean of life simply to fall back again from whence it came; but each soul is a living unit—a creature of God, a child of the Infinite; and is attended by a special care, has a separate mission, and is loved with a peculiar love; and the life of no one of us is a haphazard thing, but is God-watched and God-sustained. And though our life compared with the vast creation around us is a very little thing—for all flesh is as grass, and the perishing of all flesh would be but as the withering of grass beneath the summer heat; the mountains would not be upheaved, the rivers would not cease to run, nor the tides to flow; the stars would still shine, and the sun still go forth at evening in his pomp of gold and fire; for man on his earthly side is of little account in the creation—yet though our life be so little and insignificant, the

correct view of it is this: God who made the heavens is mindful of man; visitations of the Almighty are vouchsafed to him; the great God over all besets him behind and before, and ordereth his steps. And it is this that makes man great—the gentleness of God towards him. Without this, he is but as the bubble which is wafted against the rocks, or as the vapour that leaves no trace behind; but thus attended by the Living God, his life is seen to be stupendous in its issues, and incomprehensible as yet in its present and future significance.

Now this determination to go in the strength of the Lord God is grounded on this view of life: it is based upon the conviction that each life receives the notice of God, and that any individual soul may rest directly on the infinite wisdom and power of the Almighty. God does not deal with men in masses; He is not compelled to generalize in His government as we are; to put men into departments and classes in order to deal with them. If one of us has to superintend a large number of men, or to manage a great organization, we can only do it in the aggregate; we put men into classes and departments, and deal with them only through their managers or chiefs; but God does not deal in this way. The great world, so confusing to us, is not

great or confusing to Him; and the thousand millions of men upon it are to Him but as the two, three, or four little ones that the mother is bringing up around her in the family: and better than any mother knows her children does God know every man upon the earth; and every individual soul can look up to Him confident that God knows the tone of its voice, and bends a parent's ear to its cry. And therefore, however lowly may be our life, and however obscure may be our position, each of us may say, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." Each of us may say unto God—God, around whom blaze the thrones of innumerable seraphs; God, greeted ever by the thunder of universal praise; God, adored by bright, countless choirs, stretching further than mortal eye can behold, or mortal thought can reach—each of us can lift up our humble voice to Him and say, "*My God: O Lord, thou art my God: I will go in the strength of the Lord God.*" And this is the right view of life upon which such a resolution as this proceeds.

Secondly, this determination breathes *the right spirit of life*. It is not a self-confident assertion, but the reverse. It owns that our own strength is not enough—for why go in the strength of another if

your own strength is sufficient?—so that making this our resolution, we confess that we ourselves are weak ; that to go forward to future duty and service we need help ; and that to meet life's changes and temptations and trials, we need a strength higher than our own.

Now this is not the spirit which the world admires, for it has no words severe enough to condemn it. The confession of unworthiness and weakness which is so constantly heard from the Christian's lips, excites the world's ridicule, and provokes it to boastful laughter. But for all that, it is the ripest, serenest, and profoundest of life's feelings and dispositions. The boasting, self-confident, self-sufficient spirit is very easily acquired, and is very hollow and unreal. It is but a growth of the natural stock; and is like the white dog-rose, which falls to pieces almost as soon as plucked—and not like the deep dark flower, wet with the evening's tear, which is the product of the gardener's skill ; for only those taught of God, and educated in the school of adversity and sorrow, breathe truly this spirit of humility. The lesson of their own weakness God only teaches to those whom He would strengthen with His own strength, and He permits some men to go through life and never learn it. It is a

mistake to think that God sends trial to all alike—it is whom the Lord loveth that He chasteneth; and when God sends any of His children affliction and sorrow, it is because He designs to teach them some further lesson, and promote them to some higher spiritual standing. The flippant young trees of the wood may laugh as they see some older tree, stripped of its bark and leaves, go past them on the woodman's waggon, but it is going to promotion; it is going to form a beam in the king's chamber, or to be a mast in the stately ship, and they, vain young things, are left behind. And when in life's discipline God brings us to know how weak we are; when He has uprooted that spirit of self-trust which is the spirit of every untrained heart, and brought us to trust entirely in Himself; have we not reached a higher form of life? do we not breathe a rarer and holier spirit? We have been promoted through our drawbacks; we have progressed by reason of our hindrances; and our deepest losses have proved our highest gains.

And this is the spirit of every man who says, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." The man who resolves thus has learnt the folly of human sagacity, and found out the helplessness of human strength. He is a man who perhaps has stood by

an open grave, and, in spite of all his affections and hopes, has surrendered his child or his loved one to the dust, and learnt there how weak and helpless is man, and so has been thrown back upon the Mighty God. Or he has seen health shattered, or wealth fly away, or children turn out badly, or the false plans of wicked men succeed against him ; in one way or another he has been taught of God, and trained into a sense of his own insufficiency ; and now he shrinks from attempting the future alone, and says, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God."

And well may we cast ourselves upon the strength of God, when we think how uncertain all is before us. How completely exposed the best of us is to the assaults of our enemies! Whose home this year may not be entered by death? Whose business this year may not be undermined and destroyed? Whose character this year is safe from defamation and dishonour? It is only inexperience that can speak of going forward alone; wisdom and prudence, apart even from piety, say, "Go in the strength of the Lord God."

And the spirit of humility leading to dependence upon God, which is the spirit of this determination, is the true and right spirit of life. By this sense of our own weakness we thus possess ourselves of the

highest strength. It is not the man who says "I am strong; I am sufficient for life of myself," who is really strong: the strong man is he who says, "I am weak; I am inefficient; I am nothing, and my only strength is in God;" for the one is leaning on a broken reed, and the other has taken hold of the omnipotence of God! "When I am weak," says the apostle, "then am I strong;" for weakness relying upon Almightyness, that is the truest strength. Go not in your own strength, self-confident and self-sufficient, for the first disaster in life's path will overthrow you; but go in the strength of the Lord God, and triumph cannot but be yours. We are never strong till we have God's strength; and no lesson is more valuable to us than the lesson of our own weakness if it drives us to Him. What does the toiling oarsman need so much to learn as his own weakness? See him labouring to propel the heavy barge along the stream. What does he want to learn so much as his own weakness? When he learns that he himself is powerless, and casts down the oar, saying, "I can do nothing,"—then he will hoist his sails and spread his canvas to the breeze, and sailing along in the strength of the wind his very weakness will become his strength. And so, brethren, we want to learn our weakness; we want

to learn how that trusting in God brings us more quickly to our journey's end than trusting in ourselves; we want to know how that weakness trusting in God is the highest strength; and having learnt these things, we shall "go in the strength of the Lord God."

And then, thirdly, this resolution develops *the right method of life*.

Now this going in God's strength is a life-method. It is not for special difficulties and great sorrows only, but for life day by day. This is the fixed and settled method of the believer's life. Whether the day breaks with a dawn like silver, or is ushered in with storms and driving clouds, he says equally, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God;" for to go in this strength is his rule of life, it is the only method of "going" he ever tries. And this constitutes one of the main differences between the child of God and other men. Most men cry to God when there is a deep river to be crossed, or a high mountain to be passed, and the man is practically an atheist who does not so cry; but let me warn you not to think yourself a believer in God because, when trouble overtook you and confronted you, you besieged --
-- 'en with your piteous cries.' The atheist who

blasphemed bowed the knee to pray when the ship in which he sailed seemed devoted to destruction; but he stood up again in his insolent boldness when the danger was passed: and because you prayed in an agony when you thought yourself near to death, or when you saw trouble or adversity coming upon you, that does not evidence anything in your soul worthy of the name "faith in God." What was your prayer but the cry of pain—the terror-stricken appeal of a creature in distress? You did not want God, but only wanted deliverance; and now that health has returned, and the skies are bright again, God is forsaken once more, until the next calamity shall drive you to Him again for help. But that is not the Christian life at all: that is not going in the strength of the Lord God; and there is this great and essential difference between you and the Christian man — the rule, the foundation, the whole method of your lives are different;—you go in your own strength until your own strength fails you; *he* goes always leaning on the Lord as his helper, and God is the constant "strength of his heart, and his portion for ever." Your trust, practically, is in yourself; his trust is in the Lord of hosts.

And now let us make this method of life our own!

To some of us the future may look very bright and golden, and to others there may be much cloud, and darkness, and uncertainty; but whether bright or dark, we ought not to go forward alone. Duty will not be performed rightly, danger will not be properly guarded against, sacrifice cannot be rightly met, if we go alone.

There is our work for God—we all have a work to do *for* God, as well as a work to do *from* God. Shall we do this in our own strength? It is because we have simply trusted to ourselves that so much of this work of ours goes undone. We should have had courage to speak to the stranger, boldness to confess Christ and honour Him in the circle of our companions, determination sufficient to do the right in His name, when business associates were doing that which was wrong;—our work for God among our fellow-servants, in our warehouses or shops, in the private and business spheres of our life, would have been discharged, if we had been going in the strength of the Lord God. You who preach the Gospel, or manage the affairs of the church, or teach in the Sunday school, or visit the sick and the poor—how are you going to do it during the coming year? Give it up if you are going to do it in your own strength. If you are going forward to these works relying on

your own natural ability for them, or upon the experience you have gained by the discharge of them in the past, or upon anything that belongs to yourself—better at once relinquish them and save the failure which is certain, and the mischief which the unspiritual in doing spiritual works inevitably produce. Go then, I beseech you, in a humble sense of your own inefficiency, and let a prayerful, trustful reliance on God's help ever abide in your hearts; and going thus "in the strength of the Lord God" you shall be constantly baptized with power from on high.

And then there are other duties in life no less important than these—I mean the duties of home, the duties of the family; and we need to go in the strength of the Lord God to discharge these aright. Duties to one another, duties to children, and duties to servants: we need as much the strength of God to perform these as to perform any of the higher and so-called sacred obligations of life. What does it avail that we are active in God's service in public, if we are neglecting His service at home? Of what use is it that we are punctual in the services of the Church, and lift up united voices to God in prayer and praise, if the home we have left behind us is a scene of disorder and neglected duty. Of

what use is it to teach a dozen children in the Sunday school if our own are growing up ill-trained and vain and worldly? Brethren, we need the strength of the Lord God as much in the sphere of the family as in any other sphere of life; and if the blessing of God is to be upon our hearths as well as upon our sanctuary, we must take this resolution to ourselves, and at home as well as abroad "go in the strength of the Lord God." And when these words of our motto shall be hung up in your houses, let this thought be connected with them—they are not only the motto for our church, but also the motto for our homes.

And if we really and truly make them our own, life will be to us always hopeful, courageous, and successful. Successful, not as men count success, but successful for all that. That life cannot be a failure which is lived with God.

JACOB'S WRESTLING.

GENESIS XXXII. 24-32.

THIS was the turning-point in Jacob's history. Until now he had been full of duplicity and deceit—a mean, scheming man notwithstanding his great destiny—a man of crafty ways and unsettled principles; but in this terrible night-wrestle, this spiritual crisis as it really was in his history, he is changed; and comes forth not only with a new name, but with a new heart.

Up to this point Jacob is neither great nor good; and the mystery is how God could take a man so unquestionably mean and equivocating, and hold him on for his future service. None of the patriarchs can be set up as models of Christian morality; for they lived under different laws, and in an age when the light of truth was dim, and consequently, with great moral and spiritual qualities, they exhibited depravities which to us are simply appalling; but Jacob in his history and character falls below the lowest. His name, “the supplanter,” truly expressed his character. Over-reaching and deceiving seem to have

been the only methods of advancement he knew. The question as to the righteousness of an action does not appear to have entered his mind, but only the question of its success. Twice he supplanted Esau, and twice all brotherly or filial feelings were trampled under foot for gain. We can only be astonished at his unblushing deception ! Who but a Jacob would have taken advantage of a brother's fainting condition to get from him his birthright for a mess of pottage ?—what brother would not have given it to him outright, and have been glad that he had it to give ? Who but a Jacob would have put on Esau's garments, and covered himself with sheepskin to imitate his hairiness, and with lies and deceit practised upon his old blind father to defraud his brother of his blessing ? Such things are against the first principles of honour and natural feeling : and the man who can commit them lacks the very foundation principles of morality. They are as much opposed to natural affection as they are to righteousness ; and reveal a heart devoid of whatever nobility and integrity this fallen nature of ours may sometimes possess. Beside him, as far as natural character goes, Esau is a nobleman—free, generous, forgiving, notwithstanding his reckless, sport-loving character—yet it is not Esau but Jacob that God takes into the theocratic relationship ; and

it is not to Esau but to Jacob that He gives His blessing. Verily God chooses "the base things of the world and things which are despised, . . . that no flesh should glory in his presence."

And this morning we are to see God's training of a human life; how under His discipline a mean man becomes noble; how a man devoid of faith dies at last with prophecies on his lips: how a "supplanter" is turned into a "prince," and a "Jacob" becomes an "Israel."

The scene before us is the consummation of a long process of training. Twenty years have passed since Jacob impersonated Esau and won the blessing of his father. For the most part they have been years of bitter disappointment and defeat, for nothing of the blessing bestowed upon him has been fulfilled, and God in a marked manner has all those years been visiting Jacob for his deceit. The blessing which he stole was indeed his, for before ever he was born God said of the two brothers "the elder shall serve the younger;" and if instead of practising deceit he had allowed God to work out His own plans, it probably would have been speedily realized, but on account of his sinfulness God had in store for him long years of discipline and suffering. If any man

imagines that treachery and deceit are the road to success, let him mark the history of Jacob. There is no life in which retribution follows more swiftly or pointedly on the heels of transgression. Though in the main he was a successful man, he suffered notwithstanding the exactest justice for his transgressions, almost "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." At the outset, instead of receiving, as he evidently expected by purchasing his brother's birth-right, a double portion of his father's goods, he was driven as an exile from his home, and with nothing but his shepherd's crook was compelled to flee to another land: that is what he got for his first transgression. Then again, by impersonating Esau—by taking his garments and simulating his appearance—he defrauded him of his blessing; and in a precisely similar manner he is defrauded by Laban. The one beautiful feature in Jacob's character is his pure and devoted love for Rachel: seven years he served for her, and "for the love he bore her," says the narrative, "the seven years were as a few days;" but bitter was the deception practised upon him. He smarted under the same treachery he practised upon Esau. Leah, Rachel's sister, by her father's instigation—as he before by his mother's intrigue—personates Rachel: she puts on Rachel's garments as

he put on Esau's, she simulates Rachel's behaviour as he simulated Esau's, and closely veiled, according to the custom of the East, is brought to Jacob's tent as his bride. He imagines it is Rachel, whom he so dearly loves, and for whom he has served seven long years of service ; but lo, it is not Rachel but Leah ! Jacob is wounded by deception as he had wounded. Esau's bitter cry, " Bless me, even me also, O my father ! " was not more bitter than Jacob's when he discovered this cruel deception. The retribution was exact, and so Jacob seems to have regarded it, little as he profited by it. And not only in these instances but in numerous others God is seen visiting and rewarding him according to his works. He never saw his mother again : when he fled from home that hurried parting was the last, for she was laid in the grave before he returned. And mark the close of his life. What sight is more pitiful than that of Jacob, an old man, duped and deceived by his sons concerning his favourite son Joseph ? The little coat of many colours dipped in blood brings down the old man's grey hairs almost to the grave : the hand of retribution is still upon him. Strong and noble and believing as, through God's discipline, he has now become, the guilt of former years must be requited ; and as *he*

when young deceived *his* father, so now his sons deceive him.

Now, this system of retribution going along side by side with his prosperity was part of the discipline of God. God deals with us all in like manner, though not always in our own lives can we see clearly the connection between our transgression and our sorrow or trial. Yet a man must be very blind to his own sins if in the course of his experience he does not discover sometimes the retributory hand of God ; for God suffers no man to sin with impunity, and certainly not His children. But as in the case of Jacob, so in our own, we need a deeper experience than punishment to work any permanent change. Jacob, at the time of the text, is about to receive this. When twenty years ago, as an outcast from his father's house, he slept under the open heavens with a stone for his pillow, God revealed to him His graciousness, and he saw the angels of God ascending and descending as upon a ladder reaching from earth to heaven ; and by that God meant to teach him this—that, sinner and outcast as he was, heaven was not closed against him ; that the unseen ministries of God's providence, the ascending and descending angels, were not withdrawn from him ; and that he was not utterly forsaken and lost, but

had still a path of glory before him : and then God gave him His promise that "his seed should be as the dust of the earth, and through him all the families of the earth should be blessed." Wonderful disclosure to make to such a man ; yet how often has it a counterpart in our own life history ! But now he is returning to the land of his fathers. With wives, and children, and servants, and flocks, he is moving back, in obedience to the call of God, to the country from which he fled. What an experience he has had since as a footsore, weary traveller he passed that way with only his staff twenty years before ! He has not seen Esau his brother since, and he trembles to meet him ; for with all his experience Jacob has not learnt as yet to trust the Living God. God has been wrestling with him, so to speak, ever since ; baffling his shrewdness, confounding his well-laid schemes, beating down his self-trust, and seeking to elevate him to confidence in Himself. But here he is, returning to the land that is covenanted to him, the same at heart as he left it. First, you observe, he sends messengers to Esau with cringing, fawning words ; then he prepares for him a vast present of flocks and herds, and sends it on before to meet him ; he then divides his household into two parts, and the part he least cares for he puts first, so that

as an advanced column they might meet his brother, and if in his anger he slew them, then he and the others with him might effect their escape. Jacob shows no trust in God though he has prayed to Him, and committed everything into His hands, but trusts, as he has always trusted, in his own shrewdness, and tact, and scheming. He is still Jacob the supplanter. And after he has done all he deems advisable, he retires alone for the night into some lonely place to await the morning. And there God meets him. In the darkness he finds himself engaged in a struggle with one unknown. It is a mysterious conflict. The night-darkness hides them, and unseen they wrestle together. Hour after hour through all the night they grapple in that strange conflict. Strength opposes strength; but Jacob feels that it is with no mere man he strives. But still he strives,—has he not always striven?—has he ever once acknowledged his weakness?—and till the bars of light in the east tell that the day is at hand they wrestle together. “And when he”—that is, the unknown man—“and when he saw that he prevailed not against Jacob, he touched the hollow of his thigh, and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him, and he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh.” But Jacob feels the meaning of the conflict—and

maimed, and crippled, and helpless, learns what, strong, resolute, and self-determined, he would never have learnt ; and owning his own weakness, he casts himself helpless upon the mysterious stranger, and cries, " I will not let thee go except thou bless me." And that was Jacob's victory ; that was the spiritual turning-point in his history ; even that moment when he ceased from his own strength, and gave up wrestling to cling helplessly and await the blessing.

Now we shall see the meaning of this strange contest more clearly if we mark first that it was the angel who wrestled with Jacob rather than Jacob with the angel. Read the language of the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth verses carefully. There is a great difference between the two things. Popular exposition has confused and misinterpreted the scene.

God, who through all his life has been contending with Jacob, meets him here. From behind the veil of light and dark, where God watches and orders all our lives, He steps forth to meet him face to face. Often in his experience Jacob had wrestled and bargained with God,—it was in fact the only way of dealing with God he tried,—but now God will show him the true secret of strength. He wrestles with

him as a man, and true to his character, Jacob strives for the mastery. He has supplanted men again and again, — he has got the better of them even when they have had every advantage on their side, — and unequal as this conflict is, he carries it on until the break of day. *What does God want to teach him ?* His own weakness. Notwithstanding his twenty years' experience he is meeting Esau in the same spirit as of old—a spirit of dependence upon himself ; in reliance upon his own cunning plans rather than in dependence upon God—and God will show him that his strength is not in himself. In the mysterious conflict he is lamed with a touch of the finger, and now for the first time he learns how poor and feeble and worthless he is :—at last he finds out his own weakness,—at last he is borne down and overcome,—he can strive no more, and he clings instead of wrestles; clings to his strange combatant,—leans helplessly upon him and prays for a blessing.

Not now does God come as a man into the arena of our life, but many whom He is training know what this wrestling means. In most lives committed unto God this strange contest has its spiritual counterpart. God meets us to show us our weakness ; to reveal to us that the true sources of power are not in ourselves but in Him ; to break in us the

spirit of self-dependence and self-sufficiency that we may cast ourselves utterly upon Him. And this meeting is often like the wrestling with Jacob. In our blindness and short-sightedness at first, like Jacob, we strive for the mastery;—we wrestle with God, fight against His purposes, struggle against the decisions of His providence, hold out to the last against what we feel to be His will;—but finally we are overcome. God touches us with the finger of power:—the child over which we have struggled dies; the son whom we would not give up is laid in the cold grave, or worse, goes into the far country; the purpose or scheme or plan of self-aggrandisement we had laid out for ourselves, is broken to our faces:—God touches, as it were, the hollow of our thigh; and though ever afterward we go lame and halting through life—feeling an irreparable loss, carrying a wound that will never heal—we learn, unless we wilfully defeat God's goodness, the priceless lessons of trust and faith. In our weakness and lameness we breathe continually the spirit of dependence, and God, against whom in our self-sufficiency we wrestled, becomes our strength. Instead of pride and self-will we exhibit humility and trustfulness. Whereas before we could dare to lift up ourselves against God, after this wrestling we cling to Him, and lean upon Him; and

God becomes the strength of our life, and the heart's prayer to Him is, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

And happy is the man who has not this battle yet to fight because he has fought it. If you put yourself into the hands of God He will not suffer you to glory in yourself. Sooner or later He will meet you to reveal to you that it is not your tact, or your shrewdness, or your perseverance, or anything that is yours which is to be your trust, but that He the Living God is your strength. And sometimes the conflict is long and severe:—sometimes, indeed, it is fought out once for all in a sharp bitter struggle, but oftentimes the contest reaches over years, and in some cases even to the breaking of the day. But none who have passed through it ever regret it, for no moment in the history of the soul is so priceless as the moment when we yield utterly to God,—the moment when, feeling the uselessness and helplessness of self, we cast ourselves upon the eternal arms,—the moment when opposition between ourselves and the Father ceases, and pride and self-will give place to complete reliance upon Him, and simple restful confidence in His love. That is life's most blessed hour; and in that hour we get our new name,—the old name Jacob is taken away and the new name Israel is bestowed,—

for it is then that we have power with God and prevail. "Thou shalt no longer be called Jacob but Israel."

And going back to the narrative, there is another point to be observed : it was not by wrestling that Jacob prevailed, but by ceasing to wrestle. This also is often overlooked. Whilst Jacob wrestled he prevailed nothing ; but when, helpless, with his thigh out of joint, he could only cling to the mysterious man, he overcame. Wrestling, Jacob found out to be useless—with only a touch of the finger he was crippled and lamed ; of what use to wrestle with such a one ?—and he ceased to wrestle, and acknowledged himself vanquished ; he clung to the angel as mightily as he had striven against him, and crying in supplication, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me," he won the blessing. Trust is always the truest spiritual strength ; submission always brings peace sooner than striving ; better for us always to cling than to strive. Wrestling in strength, Jacob was weak ; Jacob, lame, helpless, clinging, prevailed.

We must beware how we allow such words as "wrestling with God in prayer" to pass current amongst us, for the spirit of prayer is not the spirit of wrestling, but the exact reverse. The first condition of prayer is submission, and no man who

expects or desires to alter the Divine will by prayer has learnt what prayer is. We cannot get by wrestling with God anything. We ought not to want anything that God sees fit to withhold, nor desire to alter anything that God sees fit to ordain ; and the end of prayer is, not to bring God's will to ours, but to bring our will to His. As long as in self-will—the spirit of wrestling—we cry to God, we shall prevail nothing ; but when in the spirit of Christ we say, “Thy will, not mine, be done,” then, although the cup does not pass from us, we are always heard, and always obtain victorious blessing. Oftentimes we may repeat the prayer—thrice with strong crying and tears, like our Lord, we may bring the petition—but never once without an entire and perfect acquiescence in whatever God shall ordain ; for if God shall think it best, better for us that we should face the cross, and ten thousand crosses, than that His will should be set aside and our will be done. Oh ! wrestle not with God : learn that your true strength is not in wrestling, but in yielding ; cling to Him rather than strive with Him. It is “Jacob” who wrestles ; “Israel,” who has power with God as a prince, clings in lameness and helplessness, and prevails. “When I am weak,” says the Apostle Paul, “then am I strong.” Weakness cast upon

God, that is strength. Hold on to God like Jacob because He is your helper; cling to him because you feel your own nothingness and His all-sufficiency; throw your arms about Him, and breathe to Him in your weak, lame, fainting condition the prayer for His blessing, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me," and you as a prince of God shall prevail, and He will bless you there.

And after this night-wrestling mark what a different spirit and conduct Jacob exhibits. God on the morrow shows him what in this wonderful experience he had already learnt—that his help was not in himself. All his preparation to meet Esau—his sending of messengers, and providing of presents, and parting his household in cunningly devised ways, was shown him to be unnecessary. God had disposed the heart of Esau towards him, and when he saw him he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him, and the two brothers who had not met for twenty years wept together. After this the supplanting spirit in Jacob gives place more and more to the trustful spirit. This night's experience he never forgot. We see him growing more and more into a beautiful oneness with God, entering more and more fully into God's purposes; and when in his old age

he is about to die in Egypt with God's promise of Canaan unfulfilled to him—gathering his sons and grandchildren around him and blessing them in the spirit of prophecy, he shows how simple and yet mighty is his faith in God, by pointing them to the coming Shiloh, and telling them, exiled as they are, “God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.”

ESAU.

"Thus Esau despised his birthright."—GENESIS XXV, 34.

THE two brothers Esau and Jacob, twins as they were, are almost at the opposite poles of character. Esau stands out for daring, boldness, love of adventure ; he is robust in strength and rough in aspect ; home life has no charm for him, but he finds his pleasure and occupation in the excitement of the chase and the daring exploits of glen and forest. But Jacob is the reverse : he is a "plain man, dwelling in tents," *i.e.* a sedate, meditative man, and a keeper at home. He is quiet, calculating, useful : he prefers watering the flocks which yield wealth, to stalking the deer or tracking the bison, which add little or nothing to the family patrimony ; and when late on in the evening he stands at the trough among the drinking cattle, and Esau comes toiling home with the results of his chase, we can well imagine how he asks himself what would become of things if all were like Esau, and how it will fare with the family wealth and the family honour

when his burly, freebooting brother comes into the birthright. For Esau cared little for such things; he was a man of the field, a sportsman by nature and choice; and his giant strength, his powers of endurance, his strong, wilful spirit and uncouth ways, all pointed him out as more fitted to roam wood and mountain in quest of game than to tend the quiet flocks at home, or minister at the sacred altar: he was not born a priest but a hunter; and therefore, although he exhibits higher qualities of nobleness and generosity and candour than his sedate and cautious brother, he is not for all that so fitted to inherit the birthright as he; for whilst Jacob lacks much of his openheartedness and good-nature, Esau is wanting in that which is more serious still—faith in the unseen, regard and veneration for pious hopes and aspirations, respect for the promise of Jehovah made to his fathers, and, above all, a worthy apprehension of his position as the elder son of a household through which God had promised all the families of the earth should be blessed. Such things were not to his mind. He was a secular man, a worldly man, or, as he is termed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “a profane person”—profane, not in the sense of vicious, but as opposed to religious, ecclesiastical, sacred; he looked not at unseen things; his physical animal

nature ruled him; the spiritual in him was feeble, and for covenant blessings, divine revelations and communings, a spiritual heritage and the glory that was afar off, he cared little. And for the same reason as men to-day of good natural parts and admirable social characters sell their spiritual birthrights, and see the Jacobs of society inherit God's blessing and become princes in the kingdom of heaven—for the same reason Esau sold his—he failed to appreciate its value. A mess of pottage seemed to him at last—because it was more palpable—more valuable; and a morsel of meat at hand outweighed a crown of glory afar off. Such was Esau—frank, openhearted, ready to forgive, generous even to a fault; but a child of earth, unspiritual, blind to life's higher glories, counting the world which is more real more certain, more desirable than that which is to come.

But whilst Esau despised the birthright, Jacob—more spiritual if less transparent—was alive to its advantages. He saw what it conferred, and we do him injustice, I think, if we imagine he sought only its material bestowments. The double portion of his father's goods which it carried with it was certainly desirable, though he in his case never received it; but to a man of his sedate and thoughtful mood, there were other things more desirable still. The

birthright conferred headship in the family; it secured the covenant relationship with Jehovah, and the blessing of His peculiar grace; it placed the possessor in the theocratic line in which the promised Seed of the Woman, the Hope of the World, should come; and these things to Jacob seemed of priceless worth. The spiritual to him was not synonymous with the visionary. The promise of God given to his fathers seemed to him his family's most substantial wealth. To him there was a meaning in the terms, "the God of Abraham," and "the God of Isaac," which subdued and awed his spirit; and proportionably as Esau held the birthright in light esteem, Jacob held it in yet deeper and deeper reverence and honour.

And therefore we must not attach importance to the transaction before us concerning its transference as though it told the whole story. The birthright is described as sold by a single act; and so strictly it was; but that single action reveals a state of mind the result of long years of conduct and experience. We often see men brought suddenly to disgrace and ruin by some such comparatively trifling deed—they sell their birthright in society for a mess of pottage, for some paltry gain, or some totally inadequate advantage—but no one supposes that that one single action is the full measure of their folly or guilt.

Society looks at the one act not only in itself, but in what it implies. It says, "A man does not do a thing like this offhand; his past life has been leading up to it; there are other things beside this to come out yet;" and society is right, for no man subverts his principles or vitiates his character by a single deed. The soul's birthright is not cast away by a momentary weakness or folly,—one act such as this before us may decide the woeful transaction, but a hundred minor actions and thousands of thoughts of wrong have gone before it to make it possible. And it was not merely the steam of the savoury meat, or the fact of Esau's hunger, which brought him to this reckless deed—the mess of pottage was but the last thing which decided the whole—in his heart his birthright had long ceased to be esteemed, as he had shown years before by his marriage with the daughters of Heth; and because he despised it he fell before this trivial test. Temptation when it comes upon a man well grounded leaves him as the wave leaves the rock over which it has rolled; but when principles are already undermined a trivial temptation, a single wave, is often enough to complete the ruin. Esau strictly sold his birthright for a morsel of meat; but no man sells his birthright for a morsel of meat—nay! no man listens even to the proposal to sell it

who has not first become unworthy of it ; and this bartering was only its outward surrender ; long ago he had suffered his crown to roll away into the dust—it were a good bargain for him now if he could get for it but a morsel of meat.

But in this transaction Esau is a typical man. He is by no means an isolated person, but the representative of a class. Men like him are found everywhere in society ; and this is the great advantage and charm of these patriarchal histories that they show us human nature free from the inventions and disguises of later ages ; and in the men and their histories we get a complete picture not only of their world but of our own. Jacob and Esau are living characters to-day : the type has not died out and been replaced by others, but they live among us in nineteenth-century dress, and divide our modern society between them. We all know Esau very well ;—not now a hunter clad in shaggy skin, carrying heavy bow and spear, more anxious to try his strong limbs in fierce encounter than bend them at the altar, having no higher ambition and no higher delight than to snare the denizens of the forest ;—but the Esau of to-day is a hunter for all that : his eye is always upon the game, and seldom turned upwards

to the stars of God : business, money, pleasure, fame are the things he hunts—nothing higher ; he has heard of a bright birthright, of unfading glory, and of a spiritual heritage, but he has that in hand which is more to his taste ; he will give alms, do kindnesses, show himself generous and independent, but his birthright!—eternal, spiritual, divine!—it is filched from him every day by the world's mess of pottage. And you have not far to go to find men, Esau-like, eating the steaming dish of lentils whilst their eternal crown is passing from their head.

For what is the spirit of Esau ? Precisely the spirit which the Bible everywhere condemns under the name of worldliness. Worldliness is not living in the world, possessing the world, using the world ; worldliness is pursuing the world which is, to the forgetfulness and exclusion of that which is to come ; it is a sacrificing of the future to the present, the enjoying of earth's mess of pottage at the loss of the heavenly birthright. Esau is a true representative of worldly men. Here is the pot of red lentils ; this is something certain, it is at hand, it is real, but the advantages of the birthright are afar off, and long years must be gone through before its benefits can be received ; and so, in the spirit of children, they prefer present enjoyment to future advantage. They

have no wisdom to wait. Let us have pleasure now, gratification now, the riot of our passions now, and let the future take care of itself. "Give me," say they, "the mess of red pottage, and he may take the birthright who cares for it." This is worldliness—the Esau spirit. And against this our Lord speaks when he propounds that problem which still waits to be solved, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" And what is the great sin and folly of the present age? Why this putting thus of the present before the future? The impetus given to commerce by discovery and competition has turned the attention of men in a marked and unexampled way to getting and acquiring; and in the mind of the present age the mess of pottage stands first to be attained. First, money, luxury, success, and then the birthright if we can; first the world which is (this by all means), and then in odd moments, and by side efforts, the world which is to come. And it needs not that a man should damage his character in the eyes of his fellow-men to cherish this Esau spirit—there is no deadly sin or heinous crime in the record of Esau's life, yet this fatal spirit was in his heart. But hundreds of men who live unaccused of any offence,

and are respected both in the market and in the church, have no other spirit than this. Religion is not first, but second ; the present world has the first place in their thoughts, it is uppermost with them ; even in the house of prayer it is that for which they are living, and the spiritual and eternal are only secondary. And yet they think to enter in at the strait gate ! Alas ! they sell their birthright not once but continually, and eat the mess of pottage which it buys ; and when they would inherit the blessing, like Esau they will find no way to reverse the bargain they have made, though they seek it carefully with tears.

And why do men put the present before the future ? Solely because they are unbelieving. They under-rate the spiritual, and count it in some way less real and certain than the material. They regard it as the poetical or imaginary. It is not real and actual to their thought. But, brethren, unless from beginning to end the spiritual world is an entire delusion, it is the most real of all realities. If it be not an utter fabrication of the fancy it is the supreme reality of being, and ought to influence us more than any fact or object of our daily life. More than meat, more even than life, our spiritual birthright ought to be to us. Better lose everything than lose it.

Beside it there is nothing precious or valuable :— all had better go than that it should go.

But Esau's manner of arguing is the common one. He lost his birthright because he counted it less valuable than his life. He put his life first and his birthright next. "Behold I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright be to me?" When, instead of our birthright, living becomes the supreme thing to us we show our unbelief. Is it the grand requisite that any of us should live? Is it more necessary that we should live than that we be noble, faithful, true? Must life be purchased at all costs, at all violations of moral order and Divine righteousness? No, brethren, it is not necessary that we should live, but it is necessary that we be uncompromising as to duty, and unwavering as to trust; it is necessary that we stand where God places us, and do the thing he has assigned to us; this is the necessary thing, that we do right and be right at all hazards and at all costs, and whether we live or not must be left to God. But men whose faith in the spiritual is not earnest and vital put life first. "Life," say they, "stands first; at whatever cost we must live; though it be a shamed, dishonoured life, with its birthright sold away from it, bought at the expense of nobility, and truth, and manhood, we must

live:" and putting life first they declare their unbelief. Would Esau, though at the point of death, have sold his birthright if he had had any earnest faith in it and in God? Would he not rather have said, "God will take care of my life; it never can be needful for a man to do wrong; under no strain, no pressure, no calamity, is wrong-doing justifiable; if only by my birthright my life can be secured, then it is God's will that I should die, for it never can be His will that I should do wrong." That was the spirit of the men of whom the world was not worthy, who counted not their lives dear unto them—the men who walked up to the block without faltering, and looked at the stake at which they were to be consumed without fear, that they might witness for the truth and for God. And faith has no alternative but to die if the birthright is the only redemption price. The man who ranks his birthright below his life has lost faith in it, and it is only a question as to the amount of pressure put upon him to make him surrender it altogether. "Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life;" and the world says, "and his honour and his fidelity also; his integrity and his faith in God too; his Divine birthright if it save it,"—for the world's estimate, Esau-like, is life first and God, Christ, heaven afterwards,

if it can! And therefore so many are saying, "We have no time for religion, we must live; we have no strength for God's service, we must live; we cannot afford to be honest, to give up all lying tricks, and abandon the dubious practices of our trade, for we must live." And this is sheer unbelief! No! let God take care of your life—"death" may be "a fearful thing, but a shamed life is hateful:" better hold to honour, integrity, truth; better keep your birthright of divinity and die; better a thousand times than purchase existence here at a cost so woeful and amazing.

But whilst Esau sold his birthright, we find that in point of material advantage he lost little. Sympathy has been called forth for him as though he became a broken-hearted, ruined man; but he became nothing of the kind. He lost his father's blessing, but he became rich and mighty—founded a powerful kingdom, reaped success and prosperity to the last, and went down into the grave at a ripe old age, having seen a life of freedom from great cares and great sorrows, and he may be called a happy man. What then did he lose? Nothing which he cared to possess. He lost spiritual standing, the covenant relationship, progenitorship of Christ, but he cared not for these;

the blessing his father gave him, "By thy sword shalt thou live," was just what suited him; and instead of being driven out an exile and a wanderer from his father's house, the reverse was the case. To Jacob befell poverty, wanderings, trials, wrestlings, and death in a foreign land; his indeed was the birthright, and what is the birthright of God? Is it to ease, and enjoyment, and exemption from trial that God calls his chosen ones? It is written, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated," and yet to Esau was given prosperity and success, and to Jacob long years of discipline, sorrow upon sorrow, and conflict upon conflict. Listen to him as in old age he stands in Egypt before Pharaoh, driven by famine out of the land he thought to have possessed: "Few and evil," says he, "have the days of the years of my life been." And yet he indeed had the birthright; for preferment in God's view is never preferment to ease and self-enjoyment, but preferment to do the heaviest labours, to fight the hardest battles, to carry the heaviest crosses. It is a birthright to victory through conflict, to perfection through suffering, to the foremost rank by virtue of the greatest labours and the noblest sacrifices. To be cast out as a wanderer with a stone for his pillow, to live in Laban's house as a hireling for twenty years with

uncertain wages, to go lame and halting through life by the wrestling of the angel, to lay in the tomb the dearest object of his love, in old age to be cast out by famine from the promised country and die in a foreign land—that was the portion of Jacob; whilst Esau lived his wild freebooting life, growing in wealth and power, making his kingdom of Edom into a settled might, and so great did it become that it successfully barred the path in Israel's return to the Land of Promise. Yet the birthright was Jacob's and not Esau's. It was Jacob who became Israel, a prince who had power with God and prevailed; it was Jacob to whom God confirmed the promise of redemption, and who prophesied of the Shiloh that should come; it was Jacob whose new name Israel has been given to the most wonderful nation the world has seen, a nation which has yet a part to play in history by which their former glory shall be eclipsed. Esau's name is "writ in water," and his nation has perished as a river in the sand; but Jacob's glory deepens with the deepening glory of the Cross, and his name shines lustrous in the background of the Messiah's throne; and as from all ages and all lands the elect host of God is gathered, coming from the north and from the south, from the east and from the west, it is "with Abraham and with Isaac and with *Jacob*" that

they sit down in the kingdom of God. Verily Jacob's was the birthright and Esau's was the mess of pottage. Let us then "look diligently lest any fail of the grace of God . . . like Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright; for afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he found no way to change his [father's] mind, though he sought it carefully with tears."

HALLOWED BE THY NAME.

“Hallowed be thy name.”—MATT. VI. 9.

THIS is the first of the six petitions which comprise the prayer given by our Lord to us. In these petitions all prayer is condensed. They are the fundamental notes which in endless combinations form the prayers of all mankind. Amplify them and they cover the whole ground of human need and aspiration. Each, like a ray of light, illuminates an abyss of human need; each expresses one of the deep and primary wants of our lives; and whatever bows the knee or uplifts the eye in prayer will be found within its compass.

And therefore it is more than a prayer—it is a Divine insight. It is a revelation of ourselves. In it we see ourselves with our true needs disclosed, with the deepest yearnings of our natures confessed, and with our sin and want all told. If you want Christ's teaching concerning man you find it in this prayer; for here He searches the depths of the human spirit, and places man as he is, without any disguises, before his Maker. It is Christ's interpretation of man, His

summary of human nature, that revelation of man to himself which it was part of His mission to give. As child, as subject, as creature, as sinner, He leads him into the Divine light; He gives a voice to his reverence, He interprets his aspirations, He fathoms those wants which are the secret of all his unrest and pain, and puts into his mouth an ascription of glory; and if you would know man, study the prayer which He who knew what was in man puts into his lips, for from this prayer we can learn not only what we want, but what we are.

And in order to give us a true prayer, a true knowledge of us was essential. "We know not," says the apostle, "what to pray for as we ought," and it is for this reason—we know not ourselves. We are each like a world in chaos, and when we would speak to God we know not how to begin, how to separate false needs from the true, how to order our wants before Him. We feel the confusion and disorder, yet know not what to pray for. In our skies storm and calm swiftly succeed each other, around us boundless mystery shuts us in, and an infinite sadness sometimes darkens our spirits—but for what can we pray? We have not the key to our condition, and as unaided we look around, can only ask "what we are and whither we are bound!" "We know not what

to pray for as we ought"—but mark how under Christ confusion becoms order, and in this prayer light is shed on man's condition, and nature, and goal. What is the centre around which man's life revolves? God! What is man's rank and station? Child! What is the secret of man's pain, and restlessness, and sin? That God's name is not hallowed, that His kingdom is not received, and that His will is not done! What is the life of man? A life that is twofold—a life sustained by bread, but another life that lives by forgiveness! And what is his destiny? It is to stand with the immortals and ascribe the kingdom, and the power, and the glory unto God for evermore! That is Christ's conception of man; that is the Divine revelation of our humanity: and because Christ perfectly knew us He could teach us to pray. Perfect knowledge is essential to a perfect prayer; and the help of Christ through the Spirit in prayer is not only to strengthen faith and awaken our aspirations, but to reveal to us ourselves, showing us both what we are and what we want.

And taught by Christ, whose knowledge of our wants is unfailing, for what is our first petition? What to you is humanity's uppermost need? What to you seems our greatest, our foremost want? Now

here we see how, trusting to ourselves, we should have erred ; for should we not have reversed the order of these petitions and put the last first and the first last ? The cry for bread—bread and all the temporal wants of this life which the term involves—generally begins our prayers. It is with the cry of “ Give, give,” that we usually come to God. Or, if we feel there are higher things than bread, still our prayer circles around ourselves, whether we say “ Forgive us our trespasses,” or “ Deliver us from evil.” Who of us would think of coming to God and putting as the first petition, as the strongest desire of our hearts and the profoundest need of our natures, the cry, “ Hallowed be thy name ” ? But that is the true method of prayer—not self first but God first : self indeed nowhere, for self is shut out altogether from this prayer, and personal wants are swallowed up in the universal need. “ Give *us*,” “ forgive *us*,” “ deliver *us*,”—not give *me*, forgive *me*, deliver *me* : and self, which fills and burdens the un-Christlike prayer, has no entrance here ; for before ever human need, and fear, and sin are touched, God’s glory, and God’s kingdom, and God’s will absorb and engage the soul, and for these, as for our truest blessings, Christ bids us first to pray.

For what, then, in particular does this first peti-

tion ask? A name is a word—and we know that even as a word the name of God is not to be profaned, for “the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain”—but the first petition which heads this prayer is vaster, deeper, loftier in its range than the profanation of a name. The name of God stands here, as elsewhere in Scripture, for His person. When Moses asked to see God’s glory, and was told that no man could see His face and live, it was promised him, “I will make all my goodness to pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee.” And the name proclaimed before him was nothing less than the sum of all God’s attributes—“The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; keeping mercy for thousands: and that will by no means clear the guilty.” That was God’s glorious name: and God such as He is in the boundlessness of His mercy, and the majesty of His holiness, *that* is His name!

And accordingly in Scripture we often find the name put instead of the person. “The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend thee.” “Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” “It is a good thing to give thanks unto thy name.” So that when

we read "Hallowed be thy name," we have not to think simply of some name of God—whether Lord, or Jehovah, or God—but of the Divine One Himself; God in all His perfection, and glory, and holiness.

And to hallow is to make holy, or to treat as holy. It is the same word so often translated "sanctify." The priests of the temple, and the vessels of the service, and the temple itself were sanctified; which means they were separated unto God, they were set apart from secular uses to the use of God alone, and so they were hallowed.

But how can God be hallowed by man? Angels and archangels cry to Him, "Holy, holy, holy, art Thou." His name is Holy—He is holy in all He is, in all He wills, and in all He does. Holiness belongs to God as brightness belongs to light. He is holy essentially, eternally, infinitely; and if none called Him holy—if He dwelt in lonely heavens, and sin beat in its deluge against His very footstool, no stain could ever sully His purity, and no dimness ever pass across the glory of His throne. God *is*, and ever *has been*, and ever *must be* holy.

And therefore this petition cannot concern the intrinsic holiness of God, but God as He is in our lives—God as we speak of Him, as we think of Him

and as we live before Him. God in this sense is hallowed or profaned by every one of us every day. When on the throne of our hearts we put some earthly idol instead of God, we cease to hallow Him. When as the end of our efforts and purposes we propose some selfish gain instead of God's glory, we do not hallow Him. The place of God is the highest, most prominent, most exalted in our lives ; and if that place is filled by something other than God, then God is not hallowed. God is only hallowed when He reigns in us supreme, when we enthrone Him in all our affections and aims, when above all else that claims our thought and strength and love, God stands first and highest ;—anything less than this is to lower God, and to rob Him of the glory due unto His name. It is to profane Him and count Him unworthy.

The language addressed to Moses and Aaron at the time of their smiting the rock will help us by contrast to understand what hallowing God means. To them it is said, " Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me (*i.e.* to hallow me) in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not lead this congregation into the land which I have given them." They did not set God first, and recognise Him as supreme ; they led the people to imagine that He

might be disobeyed, that His service might be imperfectly performed, that He was not that holy and just God which He is—and this, God tells them, was not hallowing Him. They failed by such conduct to sanctify the Lord in the eyes of the people. And so, by contrast, we learn what to hallow God is:—it is ever to recognise His glory and majesty ; it is ever to count and hold His will as supreme, and set Him above all else as the One whose commands must be obeyed, and whose honour must be exalted ; it is to give God His proper place, and to glorify Him in all that we think and speak and do.

The petition, “Hallowed be thy name,” is therefore one of the loftiest and sublimest prayers the creature can utter. It requests that in our own life, and in all other lives, God may be glorified. It asks that all false conceptions of Him may perish and that His glorious character may be made known to the universe as it is. It prays that all irreverence and disregard everywhere throughout His universe may cease, and God be blessed and glorified of all. It contemplates that which is even higher than the coming of God’s kingdom, or the universal doing of His will—even God’s immediate honour and personal glory ; and no petition more sacred or more sublime can be put into a creature’s lips.

Now this petition becomes therefore a practical prayer for ourselves—a prayer which touches the deepest and innermost want of our spiritual nature. We have said the first three petitions of this prayer concern the things of God, and such is their outward and manifest character; but the prayer that concerns the glory of God is always the truest and most spiritual prayer for the good and welfare of ourselves. Like the incense of the morning which the earth offers at the altar of the hills, such prayer returns in baptismal showers upon our souls. It is not a variation of the cry, “Give, give,” but the most unselfish, self-abnegating, self-forgetful of aspirations; but when we most lose self and are concerned only for the glory of God, self is most blessed. And so such a petition heading this prayer, concerned more directly for the honour of God than any other, expresses more deeply than any other what we ourselves want, and brings to us in more blessed measure than any other that which we ourselves need. For it asks, in asking that God’s name be hallowed, that to us may be given the grace and the means to hallow it. It pleads our spiritual weakness with the Father, and beseeches that His power to this end may rest upon us, and that His grace and strength for this purpose may be poured into our souls. It asks that all weak-

ness and want in us may vanish, that all earthliness and selfishness may be purged, that every vain ambition and unlawful desire may be taken away, so that God may absorb every thought, and fill every purpose, and be glorified in every deed. It asks that no cloud may ever dim for us God's favour, and no winter of the soul ever lessen the intensity of His beams,—that no unsteadiness may affect our aim, and no inconstancy our zeal. It is a prayer like the prayer of Christ when His hour was come, and He said, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? . . . Father, glorify thy name." That prayer, rightly understood, was a prayer for that strength and grace by which He Himself might glorify it—it asked for patience, and faith, and submission, and the all-conquering strength by which He should be able to bear the cross. It meant, "Glorify thy name in *me*, and through *me*; give me power and grace to glorify it." And when we pray, "Hallowed be thy name," the prayer has the same meaning—"Hallow it in *me* and by *me*—give *me* the grace needful to hallow it—fill *me* with the strength to sanctify it—and not only *in* me but *by* me—by me always, by me everywhere, in this world and in all worlds—Father, hallowed be thy name!" That is the mean-

ing of the petition—a petition which, like no other, fathoms the depth of our spiritual need.

But we see only one side of it if we look at it only as a petition. Prayer has always two aspects ; it expresses not only what we want, but, unless it is a mockery, what we strive for : it declares not only our want but our work. Prayer is something more than the breathing of religious sentiments—prayer which is nothing but that is the easiest thing in the world. The most irreligious man, if that is all prayer is, may make the most beautiful and saintly prayer, as irreligious men often do, for it only needs fluent utterance and polished style. But such vapouring is not prayer ; it may be fine speaking, but it never reaches the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Is that prayer, when a man asks for purity and lives daily in uncleanness, or when he prays for liberality and studies how to avoid giving ? Such prayer we know is only so much breath spent to waste, only so many idle utterances breathed into the air—a performance, a farce—for our common intelligence tells us that that only is prayer which is the outcome of the heart, and is supported by the life. When a man prays for that for which he is striving he is sterling and sincere ; there is the ring of truth in his utterances ; God sees him and knows him for a true man, and

his cry is not despised ; and the prayers of such a man may be taken both as the expression of his want and the reflection of his life.

Now it is easy to say with the lips, "Hallowed be thy name," and how often, alas ! with the lips only have we prayed it ; but, you observe, to pray it truly implies that we will strive to live up to it. It commits us to a course of conduct ; it is a vow, a pledge, an undertaking. If in the morning we say, "Hallowed be thy name," we profess that when we go forth we will seek to hallow it—that God that day shall be sanctified in our hearts, that that day the throne of our affections shall be God's, that He shall rule and sway us as His right, and that we will exalt His glory. No business which a man transacts in the day is so practical as this which he transacts with God in his prayer ; every petition is a bond, a contract, a promise laid on the Eternal's throne ; and if straight-way a man forgets his prayer, and remembers nothing of his vows to the Most High, his worship is turned into a mockery, and his life dishonours his most sacred bonds. Does not that man mock God who says "Hallowed by thy name," when the only name he cares for is his own ? Does he not mock Him when he prays "Thy kingdom come," whose only desire is for a kingdom in which he may be king ? Is

it not mockery to say "Thy will be done," and straightway forget that will and do only our own? Ah! the life in such a case gives the lie to the prayer, and turns the worship into insult and blasphemy.

Therefore to pray this prayer pledges us to strive for it. Prayer is more than a mere petition, it is a compact; and in teaching us how to pray Christ teaches us how to live. No folly is so great as to pray to God to do that for us which we refuse to do for ourselves; and lest this folly be ours let us patiently seek day by day this sanctifying of God in our hearts. Let all we think and speak and do hallow God's name. Let that name be hallowed upon our lips:—you would not use your mother's name as a common expletive, how can you use the name of God? To say "Good God!" "Gracious God!" "My God!" is to insult the majesty of Heaven; and some men need to begin to hallow God by first hallowing Him in their speech. And not only on the lips but in the thoughts hallow Him. Every unworthy conception, and every irreverent glancing of the mind towards Him, clouds and dims His holiness. As the sun, whose glory is never changed, is dimmed and hidden by earthly mists and clouds, so is God by our false conceptions and unworthy thoughts. Let God shine in His full-orbed glory, in the purity of His light, in the splendour of

His mercy, in the boundlessness of His love, like an unclouded sun into your soul; and the more lofty your conceptions, and the more true your knowledge of Him, the more his name will be hallowed. Hallow Him also in your lives : hallow Him as King, hallow Him as God, hallow Him as *Father*.

This is the first prayer, the divinest prayer, the last prayer of a disciple. It is a prayer which not only here, amid the sin and shame of earth, has to be offered, but which hereafter, when the heart is bathed in the brightness of God for ever, and the soul rests in the beatific vision of His glory, will as an eternal aspiration break from our lips. The prayer of want and sin will never more be heard, but the glory of God will never cease to be the end of every purified hope and every sacred aspiration. It is a prayer which angels might pray. And when God's kingdom has come, when God's will is universally done, when want and sin and temptation have passed for ever, and when every other petition of this prayer is useless because that for which it prays is come, this will still remain—"Father, hallowed be thy name."

THY WILL BE DONE.

“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”—MATT. VI. 10.

THIS petition is doubtless felt by most of us to be the most difficult of all the petitions of this prayer to pray, because we feel instantly its intensely personal and practical bearing. In offering the former petitions we think first and chiefly of their universal significance, but in offering *this* we feel first how deeply practical is its application to ourselves. When we say “Hallowed be thy name,” or “Thy kingdom come,” our thought takes a wide circuit; we think chiefly of the hallowing of that name among mankind, and of the coming of that kingdom to the world, and it is only after consideration that we see that we have asked for those things in our own hearts and lives, and have consequently uttered an intensely personal and practical prayer; but in this petition the personal application of it strikes us first. It is none the less universal than the other petitions, and they are in exactly the same sense personal; but about this we feel at once how utterly futile and useless it is to

pray it until we can pray it for ourselves. We begin with the personal rather than the universal; and therefore we feel concerning it, as we do not about the others, how great is its demand upon our faith and devotion, and how entirely inconsistent it is except with the most real and abiding filial spirit.

And therefore in its personal rather than its universal bearing we will regard it this morning. Of course it *is* universal, and that grandly and sublimely. Its glance is over the whole world; and its position in this prayer fitly concludes those three petitions in which we desire the things of God. It prays, in respect to nations and laws and policies, that God's will may rule and shape them; it looks upon human society in its confusion and strife, and prays that there may be peace and equity and goodwill; its sphere is wide as the world, and it asks that everywhere—in parliaments and in nations, as well as in households and individual hearts—the will of God may be done and the life of heaven be realized. But it is not in the wider but in the narrower sphere that the difficulty of praying it strikes us. To pray it in the universal sense is comparatively easy; for whilst the universal includes the personal it leaves it less conspicuous and prominent, and the full force of

the petition is not felt. A man may pray it in the universal sense and yet be unconscious of any struggle to bring his own will into oneness with the will of God : he may ask for the doing of God's will in the affairs of his nation—for the purification of commerce, the elevation of morals, the rectitude of national justice, and the general improvement and enlightenment of mankind, and that with the most sincere and genuine aspiration—and yet the spirit of personal submission to the will of God may be utterly foreign to him ; and in his own life, where that will disappoints his ambitions, crosses his purposes, and defeats his cherished plans, he may be very unwilling that it should be done. As an aspiration for the world's general good it may be offered readily ; but as a personal prayer it searches the very depths of the spirit, and tests and proves the reality of our faith and love ; and is often, as it was in Gethsemane, a prayer offered “ with strong crying and tears.”

Let us then, in the first place, consider the difficulty of praying this prayer, and, in the second place, the blessedness of praying it.

Now the chief difficulty in our looking up to God and saying “ Thy will be done,” arises from our mis-

conception of God and of what His will concerning us is. Every one of us has his own idea of God ; we all worship the same Being, but the variety of conceptions among us is as great as the variety of our several trainings and our diversified moral and spiritual conditions ; and it is because our ideas of God are so low and imperfect, and often so false, that this petition is so hard to pray.

For no man can pray this prayer of our Lord's who does not first accept the name of God with which he opens it. In the light of that name its petitions are tender and natural, but in the light of any other name they are hard and difficult. If God is our Father, the difficulty of saying "Thy will be done" vanishes—for the consciousness of His wisdom and the certainty of His love make it easy to bow to His will—but if He is but our Sovereign, or our King, or our Judge, then the difficulty is great. We cannot ask joyfully that His will be done, for there is the possibility that His justice will be measured out without mercy ; we cannot pray gladly that His rule may be established, for it may be established without reference to ourselves. We have no guarantee in a Sovereign or a Judge of tender consideration, of personal nurture and care, of solicitude for our interests ; but without fear of any loss or any hardship, without any doubt

as to what is wisest or best, we can say to "*Our Father*" "Thy will be done;" for that will, we know, however severe may be its chastisements, and however mysterious its discipline, is always seeking our advantage, and is ever identical with our welfare.

But lose sight of this name, "Father," and the prayer will falter on your lips. If God to you is only a stern embodiment of justice, if He is only the enthronement of cold, inflexible law, it will only be by trampling upon every natural feeling, and doing violence to all that is best and highest in your nature, that you can bring yourself to say to such a Being, "Thy will be done." If the popular conception of God is yours, and you think of Him as seated on the throne of the universe concerned only for His own praises, seeking only His own glory, governed in all that He does solely by considerations of Himself, you will offer this prayer, not willingly but of constraint. It may be the prayer of your lips, but it will never become the prayer of your heart; for, for what tyrannies and despotisms you may be asking you can only fear; for what cutting up of your affections and blighting of your hopes you may be praying, you imagine with dread; you have no pledges, no guarantees in such a Being, and it is only under the stern sense of duty and the sad sense of fate that you utter the

petition at all. There is no sweetness, no restfulness, no gladness in such a prayer;—you have set up an idol in the place of your loving living Father, and by a self-torture, to which the bodily inflictions of the heathen are trifling, you have brought yourself to bow down to Him; but if the secrets of your heart were known, if you had the courage to own it to yourself, the God you thus worship you in reality hate, and would, if you had the power, utterly overthrow. Yours is not the glad submission of a child, but the forced submission of a subject, and it is neither valuable nor acceptable. Endow you with sufficient might and your submission would be cast away, for your conception of the will of God is not that it is a Father's will, but a monarch's sway. It is to you hard, stern, and unbending. God does not win you by His graciousness; your heart does not leap up at the sound of His name; you know not that in Him all sweetness and tenderness and lovingness are glorified; that in His heart love has its eternal home—love that suffereth long and is kind; love that vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, seeketh not her own; love that hopeth all things, believeth all things, beareth all things;—it is not because He is unspeakably more wise, more tender, more kind than all your thought can conceive, that you say to Him, “Thy

will be done;" but of fear and dread and compulsion you breathe your half-hearted prayer; for you have not learnt His name and do not know His nature. But learn that God is a Father, and your Father,—enter this prayer by the gates and take from the lips of Christ this name; let it fill your soul, let it brighten your life, let it lead you into the infinite tendernesses of God's nature, and every thought of God that harmonises not with this name, cast it out and let it perish,—and then day by day new joy will spring up to you in offering this petition, "Father, this day and every day, in me and by me, above my blindness, above my waywardness, above my wilfulness—Father, thy will be done."

Take this name, "Father," and it will explain what the will of God towards us is: His will towards us, like the will of every true parent towards his child, is our development, our nobility, our highest manhood;—"this," says Paul, "is the will of God, even your sanctification." God, above all else, is seeking this in us; this is the wise, firm, loving purpose of His providence and grace; and whatever He does, however severe it may seem, and however it may contradict our desires and oppose our judgment, is done solely from this motive, and purely in reference to this aim. God's will is our happiness through our

holiness : He wills that there shall be no evil temper, no impatient disposition, no pride or selfishness or self-will in us, because these things eclipse our joy, and, if suffered to remain, will cause us infinite sorrow and loss. As you say of your child, " That temper will ruin him, that disposition will hinder his success, he is becoming unamiable and unlovable," and as you employ all the means your wisdom and love can suggest to deliver him from the evil, so God says and acts concerning us. His will is our purity, our full and perfect development, our Christ-like manhood : and through sorrow and joy, through reverses and success, by whatsoever means His omnipotence and grace can furnish, He is seeking it in us. The mightiest power in God is His love, and His love has taken us into its care to develop and perfect us. Do not mistake the love of God—it is not drawn aside from its purpose by weakness, or hindered in its work by ignorance. It is true and strong; it is tender and yet severe. Do you say that love is never severe ? Where do we learn that love is not severe ? Nothing can be so severe as love. Love can bear anything rather than faults in its objects. That which it loves it must have perfect. It cannot witness our imperfections and failings and be at rest. There is no contentment possible to love till there is

no stain, no blemish on those it calls its own. And to love, all discipline is possible which helps its end. It can bruise and wound, it can blight hopes and destroy prospects, it can prune with the knife and chasten with the rod, it can draw tears, even tears of blood ; and when it is most severe it is most intense, and when it is least sparing it is most faithful and true. And through all life's changes, through all its brightness and its gloom, the mighty love of God is seeking in us its ends. It is bringing us up to its ideal ; it is crushing the bad in us, and leading out the good ; it is purifying and cleansing and perfecting us ; and in His kind, strong hands we are moulded and meetened till love shall be satisfied concerning us ; for this is the will of God, even our sanctification, and this is the solution of every sorrow and every joy—a Father's love !

∴ Rise, then, to this comprehensive view of the will of God, and to say "Thy will be done" will be no longer a hard and bitter thing. Tell me that when He inflicts sorrow and when He dispenses joy God is equally mine—tell me that His will is unswerving for my interests and seeking ever my good—assure me that He who sitteth in the heavens is Father to my spirit—and what other language is possible to my lips, what other desire finds a lodgment in my heart ?

In the doing of His will lies my safety ; my joy lies in the fact of its being done ; and the prayer, otherwise difficult and hard, becomes the glad petition of my soul. In praying it, I pray for that which is highest and best. It may be that through sorrow and pain it may be answered ; but who will not suffer the pruning for the sake of the fruitfulness ? who for earthly comfort would forego eternal gain ; who would barter nobility for ease, or goodness for happiness ? The man who conceives rightly what God is can have no other prayer. " Let thy will, O God, be done," is the spoken and unspoken desire of his heart. He can trust God's will : no loss, no sorrow, no reverse, he knows will come to him but that which shall further his good ; and to grow under God's training, to come forth into God's likeness, to realize God's ideal, that fires his ardent soul ; it turns all loss to gain, and transforms all sorrow into joy ; beside it earthly considerations are dwarfed to nothingness ; the throbbings of his immortal life are in his soul, the vision of his glorious destiny is before his spirit, and his upward cry to God is that He will accomplish in him His purpose and do all His will.

A right view of God, and a right view of His will, remove the difficulty of this prayer.

And now let us consider the blessedness of being able to pray thus. "Thy will be done in earth *as it is in heaven.*" That is not only a glimpse into the heavenly world, but a revelation of the secret of the heavenly life. Whence arises its blessedness, its perfect peace, its untroubled and eternal joy? Not from its happy circumstances—that is not the answer. The answer is from its essential perfect oneness with the will of God. That is the secret of the life of heaven. Every being in that world, where no discord troubles and no sorrow pains, is one with God. The will of God is not a law to them—not something declared or revealed to which they are careful to conform—the will of God possesses them; it fills and rules them; God is reflected in them as the light is reflected in water; they do God's will in doing their own, and variance between their will and His would be the beginning of sin, which they never know. And from that oneness with God—that identity of will—arises the blessedness of the heavenly life; and if heaven is to be brought down to earth, it must be by a like doing of His will. If we are to realize anything of that heavenly life—if we are to cease from earth's unrest and be at peace, if the chafing, fretting, aching in our hearts is to end, and we are to possess an abiding inward calm—it must be by the same one-

ness with the will of God. To pray this prayer is to enter into rest, for the heavenly life from that moment begins. The dawning of a peace that is divine opens to the soul instantly that we become one with God ; and though no trouble be removed, and no sorrow be explained, the heart is at perfect rest, because it rests in God.

Sometimes we talk of submission as if it were a hard thing, and perhaps submission is hard, for there is something higher and more beautiful in the Christian life than submission. There is no submission in heaven, they submit not there to the will of God ; heaven would at best be an indifferent joy if its life were an eternal submission : that which is higher than submission is ready, cheerful, thankful acceptance, through faith in the Father's love ; and if submission be hard, when the heart is brought to this it is the profoundest joy. " Rejoicing in tribulation also," writes the exultant apostle, for he was one with the will of God. " Tribulation," says he, " worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts ;" and therefore in tribulation he rejoiced. And if we could learn heartily to pray this prayer, " rejoicing in tribulation also " might be written by our pens. We

should be thankful even for our sorrows ; and sorrow and gladness would equally press thanksgivings to our lips.

Pray this prayer, and it will bring you rest. Once realize that life is the unfolding and perfecting of the will of God, and you will be at peace. Chance, accident, calamity there will be none. All will be well with you, and you shall dwell without care as a child at home in the Father's house.

THEY SHALL SEE HIS FACE.

“And they shall see his face.”—REV. XXII. 4.

THE Bible gives us its revelation of heaven on the last page. The book begins with paradise and closes with heaven. Between lie all the grief and tragedy of sin and redemption, but at either end there is peace. The morning dawns in silver, and though storm and darkness and battle fill up the day, the evening sets in gold. But the Bible is not full of heaven; it is a book more about earth than about heaven. Under Moses heaven is never once appealed to. The kingdom of God on which the eyes of the prophets kindle is the kingdom of God upon earth, and not the kingdom of God in heaven. Christ gives us no pictures of heavenly blessedness, but only hints; and from the apostles we have only scattered thoughts and aspirations. The Bible is concerned most with earth—to make the present life real and earnest and solemn; it would teach us how to bear life's sorrows, meet its temptations, perform its duties. But at the last—when its mission is over and its great work

achieved—it draws the veil aside and gives the world a vision of peace : and the book which has led us to Sinai's trembling mount, and turned our eyes upon Calvary's wondrous sacrifice, leaves us with our gaze fixed upon the heavenly city ; its walls of jewels, its gates flashing in pearl, and God its light ; and its last words are pathetic and musical as a song—"There shall be no more curse : but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it ; and his servants shall serve him ; and they shall see his face ; and his name shall be in their foreheads."

And the position of this revelation in the Bible is very instructive. It is an experience which is mature that really longs for heaven. Much beautiful sentiment is talked and sung about heaven, but often it is only sentiment and no more. Those who long for heaven in truth are not those who experimentally are at the beginning of the book, but those who are at its close. For the first influence of Christianity upon a man is not so much to lead him off to a life which is to come, as to sharpen and deepen his moral earnestness for the life which is. The life of earth becomes to him more real and solemn ; duty and responsibility are fulfilled with greater devotion ; time becomes more precious, and opportunities of usefulness more valuable ; and as the first result of the Christian life we

do not get aspirations for glory, a desire to depart, a longing for home ; but holy resolution, zeal that burns as a fire, love that embraces all woes and all sufferings, and seeks to carry the world in its arms to the feet of Christ ; and only after by the Spirit there has been wrought a fitness for heaven are there true longings to enter it. All other longings but those born of inwrought meetness are spurious and effeminate. When a deep hunger and thirst for holiness are created, then heaven is desired ; when through the purified soul there sweeps the deep wail of creation's pain, then, like the apostle, we can say that we wait for the adoption ; or when oneness with Christ has become perfected, then to depart and be with Him seems far better. But these things are fruits of the Spirit ; they are things of growth, discipline, cultivation, and they belong not to the babe in Christ but to the man. To Paul, rising from the blinding light on the road to Damascus, the proper question is, "What wilt thou have me to *do*?" After he has fought the good fight and kept the faith, it is allowable as well as natural to look to the crown of righteousness and the eternal reward. But these are the last things and not the first things ; they come on the last pages of the book and not upon the first.

Moreover Providence has much to do in creating

in us longings for heaven. If you go through a forest on a fine clear night at midsummer you will see but little of the heavens. The thick green foliage shuts out the stars; but where the storm has broken the boughs, and the lightning stripped the leaves, there through the desolation the heavens of God appear. And it is through the losses and sorrows and bereavements of life that the thoughts of most of us are probably first turned to heaven. Whilst life is an umbrageous forest we care not for the tranquil heavens above us; we do not see them, in fact, and do not need them. But God educates us by His providence. God deals with us as the eagle deals with its brood. When the young eagles are strong, and show no inclination for flight, the mother bird, true to maternal love, breaks up the nest. Never, if undisturbed, would they expand their wings over the deep ravine; never would they soar into the sunlit skies; never, with flashing eye and strong pinion, would they rise to greet the morning sun as he kindles all the mountain crests with flame; and therefore she breaks up the nest, and when only the cold bare rock is beneath them, they find their wings and fly. And so when we begin to say within ourselves, "I am satisfied and contented here; this world is enough for me; I want no other world than this;" from that moment

God begins to break up our nest. The grave receives husband or wife, child or friend. Or business fails; competency is exchanged for poverty, and a life of ease for one of toil and care. Or health is shattered; for strength we have weariness, and days and nights of suffering become our portion. And then many are the winged thoughts we send out over the gulf of death; many the wistful looks we cast to the horizon; often with tearful eyes do we turn towards the better country. And so God schools and educates us for our departure. But these things are not in life's first chapters, but in its last; they are not nearest the beginning of Christian experience, but nearest its close.

If, then, the desire for heaven is the fruit of the Spirit, and one of the highest things in our spiritual education, we may well suppose that the object for which heaven is chiefly desired is spiritual also. To desire heaven as the alternative of hell is to desire nothing spiritual; to desire it as a place of ease and pleasure has nothing spiritual in it; to look to it even as a refuge from pain and sorrow and trial, is to desire it for its least and not for its greatest blessings. He that is spiritual desires heaven because Christ is there; because there every motion of the soul will be perfectly under His sway; because there in His

presence every hidden germ of beauty and holiness will open and blossom as beneath its native sun ; because there Christ will appoint new services, reveal new glories, lead on to new delights, and without any veil between manifest the riches of His grace and glory. Christ is the attraction of the renewed soul.

To Bible writers it is not that heaven is a place of rest and peace that most charms them ; not that there tears never fall and the cry of sorrow is never heard ; not that there pain never comes and death can never enter ; not that its streets are golden, its fountains crystal, its trees unfading—but the great aspiration of their souls is Christ. To His disciples Christ Himself judged it enough to say, “Where I am ye shall be also.” To Stephen he thought it sufficient, when the murderous stones fell thick around him, and life was ebbing fast, to show him Himself standing at the right hand of God. When Paul, lying in the Roman dungeon, desired to depart it was “to be with Christ.” And John, baffled in the attempt to descry the future, could only fall back upon the thought, “We shall be like him ; we shall see him as he is.” It was Christ that filled their souls with expectation, and kindled their desires for heaven.

And this language of the text therefore I take liter-

ally—we shall see Christ. Indeed, there is no other sensible interpretation open to us. Christ's presence in heaven is an actual fact—wherever heaven is there Christ is. Literally, actually, visibly He is there, and “we shall see His face.” Doubtless more is implied in the words than simply seeing Him with the eyes;—as when John says, “There is no more sea,” he does not simply tell us that the actual sea is wanting, but uses it as a symbol of the mystery, the separation, the uncurbed power which shall never enter there;—but by this statement, whatever else may be meant, it certainly is meant that face to face we shall see Christ. Think of it! Take hold of the sweetly solemn thought! The same Jesus who walked those holy fields; who gave health for sickness, joy for tears, life for death. The same Jesus to whom Peter said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;” on whose bosom John lay; whom Judas kissed with the kiss of traitorous friendliness. The same Jesus who prayed in Gethsemane, who stood at Pilate's bar, who was led to Calvary's cross, and who there expired for our sins. The same Jesus who behind the veil is now our soul's hope, our inspiration to righteousness, the resurrection and the life to our spirits. We shall see Jesus. With what splendours He shall be surrounded I know not. If

on Tabor His glory was as the light, and His garments put to shame the snows—if at Patmos “his face shone as the sun, and His feet were like fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace”—what shall be His glory there at the right hand of the Father, our thoughts cannot conceive. But I believe that we shall see His face. No brightness shall there smite us to the ground, or ward us off from drawing near to Him. We shall see His face. The same face: that brow that was pierced with thorns—those feet that were kissed by Galilee’s waves, and nailed to the shameful cross. And He will be the same in *heart*: exaltation has not robbed Him of His compassion and sympathy: and if here, as Peter writes, the Christian’s joy in Christ whom he has not seen is “a joy unspeakable and full of glory”—what shall be his joy when, “in the glory that He had with the Father before the world was,” he shall see Him face to face?

And seeing Christ face to face will lead to other blessings. It will lead to *a fuller knowledge of Him*. Christ is only partly known by the most earnest of His disciples here. He did not and could not fully disclose Himself here. We saw something of His meek, holy, loving nature, but it was only a partial revelation. “The light shone in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.” The atmo-

sphere of earth was too thick, too dull, too heavy, for the full disclosure of all those beauties of holiness, those refinements of goodness, which are His. The character of Christ as we behold it now has struck the world, friends and enemies, with admiration for two thousand years ; but to me it seems we know but little of Christ compared with what we shall know. We are but as men within the arctic circle gazing upon the sun : glorious in their eyes is the fiery ball that skirts for a brief period their snowy horizon, and wondrous fair is the light that brightens awhile their icy realm ; but what know they of his burning rays, or of the glory of tropic noon ? Here Christ's glory was only partially seen—we see through the mists of prejudice and ignorance—here “we know in part, and see through a glass darkly,”—but there His full lustre shall be seen : “We shall see His face,” and in His face see more and more of the glory of God.

And men felt that here Christ was not fully known. The apostles felt it : they bowed the knee before him, but knew that He was higher and nobler than all their thoughts of Him. John says, “We beheld his glory ; the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Peter says, “He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.”

James calls Him "The Lord of Glory." Paul says He was "The brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." Put these expressions together, and they reveal to you how conscious were those who knew Him best of their imperfect knowledge of Him. Their expressions strike off into infinity: His glory is "as of the only-begotten of the Father;" His riches are "unsearchable;" His love "passeth knowledge."

But there, as eternal ages roll on, we shall discover His character and "follow on to know the Lord." By what new manifestations He shall reveal His glory we cannot tell, but we are told that it is the purpose of God in the ages to come to display upon us all the riches of His grace; and those riches of grace will, we may be sure, be in connection with Christ. There, John tells us, "the Lamb shall dwell among us, and shall lead us to living fountains of waters." Fountains of living water He opened here, and He said, "If any man drink of the water that I shall give him he shall never thirst:" what other fountains he shall open hereafter thought is powerless to conceive. But this is certain—the ages will awaken no new desire which Christ will not fill, and the soul will feel no want which He will not more than meet.

And seeing Christ's face will lead also to *fuller likeness to Him*. It is not as spectators that we shall see Him. None see heaven who do not share it ; none look on its worship who are not worshippers ; none listen to its songs who belong not to its choir. And it is not as strangers or outsiders that we shall see Christ. Seeing Christ has a transforming power, and to see Christ will be to grow like Him. You see this principle operating continually. You cannot be in the company of some great, sympathetic, loving nature without its affecting you in the direction of itself. A person of deep sympathies, full of tenderness and consideration for others, self-forgetful and loving, taken into your friendship, unless your nature be utterly hard and unimpressible, will soon produce a marked effect upon your character : if you only admire such a man, his character will influence you, whilst to love him is a spiritual education. We see the principle most strikingly illustrated in the effect of wickedness. The bad boy, if he be stronger in mind than the rest, corrupts the whole school : that is, he exerts his influence, and other boys become like him. It is the same principle. Those we are most with, those we most admire, those whom we study, mark, observe, those whom we *love*, produce more or less their likeness in ourselves. And it is so

with Christ : seeing His face we shall grow like Him. Paul tells us this is the effect even of studying His word—"Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord we are changed into the same image." John recognises the principle—"We shall be like him, *for* we shall see him as he is."

"They shall see his face;" they shall grow eternally more and more like Him. Like Him absolutely we can never be, for He is the image of God. Perfection is of two kinds—negative and positive. Perfect freedom from sin, and perfect possession of all good. Sinless, like Christ, we shall be ; but the possession of Christlikeness is a growth, a matter of attainment. Infinite progress, therefore, is before us.

In conclusion. "*They shall see his face ;*" "*Every eye shall see him ;*" "*Before his face* heaven and earth shall flee away." Those on the left hand will see "*his face,*" as well as those on the right : but what anguish and remorse will fill the soul. Then they shall pray who never prayed before ; but not to Christ : "*Rocks, fall on us !*" "*Hills, hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne,* and from the wrath of the Lamb !"

LAST SERMON.

Preached on the 17th of June, 1877; six weeks before his death.

TRUE GREATNESS.

“The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”—MATT. XX. 28.

THESE words are part of Christ's reply to the question debated among the disciples as to which should be the greatest. Three distinct instances are recorded by the Evangelists in which the subject was discussed amongst them, and in each of them our Lord's reply is practically the same. On the first occasion they seem to have contended concerning the highest *dignity* in the kingdom, and Christ answered them by setting a little child in their midst and telling them that “whoso humbled himself as that little child, the same was greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” In the passage before us, their thoughts are directed to the highest *rule*, and our Lord points them to the office of a servant, and

the position of a slave, declaring that whosoever will be great must serve, and whosoever will be chief must minister ; appealing in confirmation and illustration of His words to His own great example, how that even He Himself “ came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” And the last occasion on which the question was raised, was at the institution of the Lord’s Supper, and then also Christ made in spirit the same reply. Then He illustrated by an action what He here delivered in words—He arose from supper, and took a towel, and washed the disciples’ feet, saying, “ Ye call me Master and Lord ; and ye say well ; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. . . . Verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord ; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.”

Now the replies given by our Lord on these occasions, and especially on that of the text, answer not only the particular question debated by the disciples as to “ who should be the greatest,” but answer the broad and general question so often asked among ourselves what true greatness is. “ What is it that makes a man great ? Wherein does true greatness consist ? ”

Now on this subject there are two standards. In Christ's reply we find them both ; and He pointedly alludes to the false standard that He may set over against it the true. " Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them ; and they that are great (*i.e.* great according to the world's standard of greatness), exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you : but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister (*i.e.* your servant) ; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your *slave*" (such is the force of the original word).

Here, then, are two standards. According to one standard—place, office, dominion, titles constitute men princes, and make them great. They are the great ones, according to this standard, who have most lordship and authority—who fill the highest places, and move in the stateliest ranks, and enjoy the richest things. The great, according to this standard, are not the toilers, but the rulers ; not those who carry the heaviest burdens, but those who bear the least ; not the men who labour most and sacrifice most, but the men who make others labour and sacrifice for them—men lapped in luxury, flattered by homage, pampered by wealth—these, according to the one standard, are the great, and in *such things* does its greatness consist.

But over against this standard Christ puts another. "So shall it not be among you : but whosoever will be great among *you*, let him be your servant ; and whosoever will be chief, let him be your slave." And in these words we learn the secret of true greatness. Not the men who rule, but the men who serve, are the truly great. Greatness which is real, is the greatness of doing great services, and making great sacrifices. The toilers, and burden-bearers, and cross-carriers—these are the real great ones. The men who go down lowest, who do for humanity the hardest work, who minister to its deepest woes, who grapple with its heaviest and sorest evils—these are society's true princes. To be clothed in purple and fine linen, and to fare sumptuously every day—there is nothing great in that. Fine clothes, fine titles, fine houses and fare, make no man great. True greatness comes, not through self-exaltation, but through self-abasement ; not by pushing one's self up, but by pushing one's self down ; not by being ministered unto, but by ministering. That man is greatest whose service is greatest, whose spirit is humblest, whose devotion to the cause of others is the most entire ; for the measure of true greatness is the measure of our self-sacrifice : as we can serve *others*, live for others, suffer for others, die for others,

so are we truly great ; and he is the greatest who is the servant of all. " Even as the Son of man "—whose self-abasement and self-sacrifice, transcending all, gives Him the chief place over all—" Even as the Son of man, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Now in the words of our text our Lord points us to Himself as the great example of this spirit of self-sacrifice, and the highest illustration of this law of greatness. " He came not to be ministered unto but to minister." He might have come to be served. Instead of the hard lot of poverty He might have chosen a position of luxury and affluence. His brow might never have been wet with the sweat of toil, and his hand never hard with the print of labour. The world might have danced attendance on His steps, and wherever He went there wealth might have spread His table, and indolence prepared His luxurious couch. Once, we know, in the mysterious conflict of the desert, there swept into His vision all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and—O ! mighty temptation to a man !—by one act He might have escaped the hardships of His lot, and placed Himself upon a resplendent throne, wielding a sovereignty wide as the world. And not only

were earth's hosts at His bidding prepared to do Him homage, heaven had her countless choirs, and not one in all her angelic legions but would have deemed it signal honour to leave his station there to do for Him the most humble service. But when He came on His errand of redemption, He came not to be ministered unto. He chose poverty, and necessity, and adversity. He had the hills that His own hands had formed, and the streams to whose fountains His own voice had given birth, but He had no more ; and He the Son of man made Himself the servant of all. There was not a poor leper in all Judæa who might not command His touch. There was not a sorrowing broken heart anywhere to which He was not ready to minister. The sick lined His path, and the poor thronged upon His steps. There was not a woe of mind or body or soul which was not His care. No plea of weariness, no sense of dignity, no consideration of self, ever hindered Him from His work of ministering unto others. He looked not on His own things; He saved not His own life. And as we behold Him in the towns and villages of Judæa, the centre of help, the source of innumerable streams of joy, spending and being spent for those who make Him such poor return, we feel how matchless is the power and beauty of a life of minis-

tering, we are touched by the true greatness of humility, and behold in the life of Christ a striking illustration of His own words, that He is the greatest who ministers, and He is the chief who is the servant of all.

But this law exemplified in the life of Christ is, as far as can be seen, not only a law of this earthly life, but is universal and eternal; and he who in any world proves himself the greatest minister is the noblest being. Heaven is under this law as well as earth; angels as well as men; yea, Divine greatness as well as human. The glory of angels is the glory of serving, for "are they not all ministering spirits"? To the saints also, as one by one they leave their work for God on earth, a greater work for Him is given in heaven; so he that was faithful over a few things is made ruler over many things, and thereby enters in deeper, fuller measure into the joy of his Lord. And though we sometimes speak of God as exempt from all conditions, and all laws, yet it is permitted us reverently to conceive even of Him as also exemplifying and glorifying this law of greatness that He has established. He is greatest because He is the greatest minister. The general view of God is that He is a great Receiver;

the most glorious view is that He is the greatest Giver. God is ever giving. Forth from His eternal fulness the tide of His beneficence streams to all beings and all worlds. He is the Sun of the vast universe He has called into existence ; and every moment He is flooding it with His glory, and blessing it with His lavish beams. There is not a flower that blows which He has not clothed,—there is not a bird on the wing which He does not feed,—there is not a world in space which does not rest upon His hand,—there is not an angel in heaven which is not blessed by His smile : and there on the throne of the universe He reigns, blessed of all, and worshipped of all, and loved of all—the greatest Giver and the most glorious Minister in the universe He has made. Look at the great ocean ! All the rivers run into it, and it is never full ; there is not a stream anywhere which is not bringing to it its tribute ; there is not a tinkling rill upon the mountain, not a silver rivulet in the valley, not a broad deep river in any land, which does not hasten to deepen and swell its flood ; —a great receiver is the sea ! But there is another view which we may take. Whence those showers that baptize barren rock and fertile field with fruitful rain ? Whence the outpouring of the clouds, closing the chapped ground, replenishing the fountains of

the springs, and storing the empty reservoirs of the earth with plentifulness and abundance? Whence that diamond on the velvet of the rose, and that pearly network on the spears of grass? The answer is, From the ocean! This is the great giver! To every lip it sends its cooling draught; on every root it pours out its offering; from the white pitchers of the clouds it empties itself on hill-top and valley together; and giving as well as receiving is the law of its being.

And when I think of God, it is as the great Giver that He seems most glorious. God receiving all—praise from every world, glory from every event—that is a grand conception! But God giving to all—sustaining, nurturing, serving all—God the greatest Giver, the most glorious Minister—giving to the unworthiest, ministering to the meanest—that is the view which strikes me as the most glorious and sublime.

And this was the spirit of Christ's life: "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." He came to serve others; He came that He might bring light and joy and blessing where there were only despair and death. He came to give Himself away;—not to serve Himself, but to serve us—not

for His own glory, but for our good — not to place Himself on a high pre-eminence of exaltation, but to bring us back to life and God. It was love to us, and not love to Himself that moved Him; and though He has won by it glory and exaltation—for God has knit reward and good-doing inseparably together — yet that which moved Him was the benefit He might confer on us, and not the benefit He might Himself derive. For there is a Divine delight in self-sacrifice;—there is a joy in doing good which, exclusive of any future recompense, amply repays the doing it. The angels of God find their heaven in ministering; the saints and noble ones of earth prize it as their chief delight; and if you have never tasted this joy, then, whatever other joy you have tasted, the ripest cluster on life's vine has never yet been squeezed into your cup. You may have entered into many a pleasure, but you have never yet entered into the joy of your Lord. But when, without any hope of reward, without any thought of gain, out of the pure love of God in your heart, you go down and help the poor, or instruct the ignorant, or lift up those that have fallen into the mire — Ah! then you are great—then you stand with Christ in His joy. When you *have gone* lowest, and have made yourself the friend,

the servant of all, then you indeed stand highest ; and heaven has no purer fountain of bliss than that which flows by your side. "Not to be ministered unto, but to minister !" That was the spirit of Christ's life, and it is the spirit of every life in proportion as it is noble and divine. Heaven knows only this spirit.

"An angel's wing would droop if long at rest,
And God Himself unblessing were unblest."

But our Lord points us not only to the spirit of His life, but to the sacrificial meaning of His death—"And to give His life a ransom for many." His death therefore must be regarded as putting the crown on His life. Outwardly He seemed to be led to it by violence ;—there was plotting and treachery at work to bring Him to it ;—Pilate and the soldiers and the chief priests, when they come upon the scene, seem an unnatural interposition ;—the cross seems to interrupt the life, to stop the outflowing of a ministry growing more beautiful day by day ;—it seems to the outward eye to break off the life just at the point where it was most useful and most sublime. But enter into the inner spirit of the Lord's life—look at that profound principle of self-sacrifice on which it was moulded—and you will see then that the cross, apparently so inter-

ruptive and unnatural, was the true climax of the life, and the most complete and perfect consummation of His mission. In order to give His life as a ransom He came;—He lived in order that He might die;—He took His life in order that He might be able to lay it down. When on the throne of His glory He saw not only the manger, but He saw the cross—the cross with its thorns and nails and spear—and He accepted and embraced it, and His coming to earth was not only for a life-ministry, but for a life-sacrifice.

And why, brethren, this stupendous sacrifice on the part of the Son of man, but that without it His love could not accomplish its ends. Love can bear any burden, it can carry any cross, but this it cannot bear—it cannot bear to be defeated. Let it gain its object, then it will despise the cost. And why did the Son of man give His life “a ransom for many?” For this reason: only by such a sacrifice could His love deliver us. If mankind only needed reforming, and instructing, and setting on an upward path as some preach to us, then the ministry of His life and the influence of His teaching had been enough to work the change; but mankind needed more than reforming, we needed *redeeming*—nothing *but redemption* could bring us out of our bondage—

and Christ found the ransom in Himself;—"He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

And here at the cross we see the infiniteness of His love! Leave awhile the life of Christ and stand on Calvary! Take the explanation of that death given by Him who died. Some say it is Paul who has told us that the cross is a sacrifice. Nay, it is not only Paul, it is Christ Himself. O! look solemnly at that sacrifice! Why that profound obedience—obedience unto death, even the death of the cross—on the part of the Son of man? It was for your sake! Why the awful necessity that the Son of man should be cut off thus, and surrender His life in a manner so awful? Ah! 'tis the ransom of thy soul He pays! Why did He not—He who was the resurrection and the life—escape death, and, like Enoch and Elijah of old, go up in a cloudy, fiery chariot to His throne? Ah! He came to give His life a ransom for thee. This is His great love to you and to all men—He has "loved you, and given Himself for you!"

Here then is the completeness of Christ's life,—in life and in death He was devoted to others. He served not Himself—He looked not on His own

things—self never entered His heart selfishly—all His thought, all His conduct, His whole being, was and *still* is ruled by love to others.

And being the greatest sacrificer, and becoming the lowliest servant—stooping lower than the lowest—becoming even a curse for us—*therefore* God hath highly exalted Him. Not by any arbitrary decree is Christ seated on the throne;—He is there by virtue of what He is. “Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God : but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” *Wherefore !* “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name : that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

NOTE.—The earnest appeal with which this sermon concluded, was never written.



